

STARBURST

**DIRECTOR
STEVEN
SPIELBERG
ON
THE MAKING
OF E.T.**



plus a preview of the new
John Dystra
effects movie
STARFLIGHT ONE

interview with
fantasy female
sybil danning



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 6-24-2000

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Cheamworth Ltd

Worth Ltd
seating:

Typesetting:
London Composition

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SH Space Sales

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KRULL COMPLAINT

Okay, it was kind of Pinewood to lift the curtain of secrecy from Krull, but was it really worth donating half your issue to the film? I think not. Krull looks interesting but honestly, I don't think people buy *Starburst* just to read about one film. *Starburst* is a success because in each issue it covers such a wide and interesting field of SF and fantasy. Issue 52 was a definite disappointment (almost as bad as the infamous *Zombie* issue), so please get back to your usual high standard.

Nick Brett,
Old Town,
Swindon.

Alan McKenzie replies: "I'm sorry, Nick, but I have to disagree with you on every point you raise. You say you don't think that people buy *Starburst* to read about one movie. Of course neither you nor I know precisely the reason any one reader buys *Starburst*. So we experiment. As it happens, you are in the minority. Most readers loved our Krull coverage. And as for the 'infamous' *Zombies* issue ... according to the sales figures, that issue outsold both the preceding issue and the following one by several thousand copies. So who do I believe?"

KRULL PRAISE

I would just like to thank you for *Starburst* 52, which was totally different and very interesting. The film *Krull* sounds like it could be a spectacular (I hope so). The making of *Krull* was described in detail but not the storyline, which is great. You haven't spoiled the film for me but made me wait for it with great anticipation. This issue's format will be repeated in the near future, with films like *Revenge of the Jedi* being looked at, but please keep your excellent reviews and interviews in most issues.

Starburst is a credit to you. It is well-arranged and has excellent critical reviews and interesting interviews and *Things to Come* is highly informative and accurate. The colour photos are great, but please, please increase the number of pages and put the price up to the same as your American contemporaries if need be.

As a fan of most fantasy films, I did enjoy this summer very much and look forward to more fantasy releases, which are much better seen at the cinema (a good one) than on video.

Anyway, please keep up the good work and thank all the film-makers of fantasy for the great summer they have given us.

Kevin Conway,
Harworth,
Nr. Doncaster.

You're absolutely right about *Starburst* 52. It was different. Some readers just don't like change. But unless we are told otherwise by the majority of our readers, we will be devoting the occasional issue to a major fantasy film in the making.

As for your proposed page count increase and price rise, we're not so sure. We feel we have a format which we can always be guaranteed to fill with lively and interesting features. We wouldn't want to stretch the fabric too thin, would we? Unless, of course, our readers think different!

MORE TV

All in all, the change in format of your mag has been a total success. However ... on the front cover it states that *Starburst* is the "Magazine of cinema and Television fantasy." Unfortunately, coverage of tv science fiction in recent issues has been effectively nil and with TV Zone shrunk to a single page looks to be staying that way. Okay, so this summer has seen a big crop of sf films released, most of which deserve large attention but the paucity of tv coverage has been noticeable for a long time now. So why not have an in depth look back at, say, *The Prisoner*. You could even interview Patrick McGooch who is at the moment in Cornwall filming HTV's remake of *Jamaica Inn* (see how helpful I am?). Then again just because *Doctor Who* has his own magazine doesn't mean you shouldn't run articles on the show in *Starburst*.

I was interested to read in "Things That Didn't Come" that Tony Crawley once ran a picture from the *Sound of Music* because three of the top cast had grown into stars of the Fantasy genre (if *Spiderman*, *Logan's Run* and *Lost in Space* ever had any). Anyway, have you ever heard of a 1958 (I think) British picture *Hell Drivers* which is generally forgettable except that its cast included: William Hartnell, the first *Doctor Who*; Patrick McGooch, *The Prisoner*; David Macallum, our *Men from Uncle* and Sapphire's partner; Herbert Lom; star of innumerable *Pink Panther* movies; and last but not least Sean Connery, *The James Bond*. What makes it more unusual is that only McGooch had a major part in the torrid tale of fierce rivalry between several lorry drivers who all seem to think they're Stirling Moss' brother (at least that's the way they drive). I would be interested to know if this is a record for actors appearing in a film and then going on to star in the fantasy world.

Still on "Things That Didn't Come" according to Kaledoscope, the Radio 4 arts programme, William Blatty's exorcist prequel, *Legion*, was the star book on Simon and Schuster's display stand. Apparently they expect to sell 3 million copies in paperback (or was 3 million the advance they paid him? It's difficult to tell these days).

I see that *The Black Hole* is to be ITV's big Christmas Day film. Won't that be something to look forward to? Apparently the managing director of TSW, one of ITV's regional stations doesn't think so saying that "the film is rubbish, it bombed in the cinemas and will do the same on T.V.". He sounds like Tony Crawley to me. Well, that's all I have to say for the moment.

Richard Fitzgerald,
Newark,
Notts.

We did actually cover *The Prisoner* way back in issue 2 of *Starburst*. But it was a long time ago!

AND YET MORE TV

The *Krull* issue of *Starburst* was the best in recent times. I knew next to

FOR THE RECORD

I feel I must write to you on the subject of Mat Irvine's review concerning the *No Strings Attached* album (*Starburst* 49).

He states that the "Hijacked" track came from *Captain Scarlet* when actually it came from the *Joe 90* series in particular the second episode entitled "Hijacked".

As to the "Parker, Well Done" track, this first appeared on a Century 21 mini album entitled TV21 Themes (1965) along with five other tracks.

Craig C. Jackson,
Fenham,
Newcastle on Tyne.



nothing about the film, the whole magazine was almost given over to it. The *Krull* special! And... I found myself totally immersed in it! After buying it I promptly dropped into my favourite pub seat and did nothing but drink beer and read *Starburst*. A superb way to spend a Saturday afternoon by any standard! It seems to me to be your most extensive coverage of an item since your equally excellent *Day of the Triffids*.

But there are things that disappoint me with most issues. You seem to have cleared up the bias for gore that was present. But one thing that hasn't changed is the *Starburst* cover. A cover, I always thought was the thing on a magazine that should catch the eye of passers by in a newsagent, often engaging the interest of a usually uninterested customer. But I don't think *Starburst* does that at all. The covers are horribly dull. More often than not they are made up of several dull photos, bittily cut into with inserts. Even the full photo ones fail. The *Conan* cover for example looked as if it was intended to catch the eye of the odd female reader. But it didn't do much Arnold did it? I've seen loads of stills that are tailor made for covers, such as the pose of Conan wearing the Viking style helmet.

The same with *Blade Runner*. These covers were truly awful! Surely a big colour portrait would have grabbed a few Harrison Ford fans. Any photos with the subjects facing the camera eg. the American Werewolf issue. That was as striking cover (even though I hated the subject!) The same goes for the issue of cinema with the *Tron* cover. That should definitely been a *Starburst*

cover. Always use good quality colour photos. No one but we regulars (I've read it since issue one) would notice in newsagents—as it is we have to look for it!

Onto another subject close to my heart. For the amount of coverage you give to TV, you might as well add '... literary and recorded fantasy' to the cover's subtitle, since TV is relegated to nothing more than a feeble column. A column which seems to be more about related items than TV itself.

Please do all your readers a big favour... report on TV fantasy/SF!! You never said a word about the BBC's *Plays for Tomorrow* which every bit as relevant to *Starburst* as the Bond films and *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*! Most importantly you should cover all aspects of British telefantasy where ever possible, past, present, and future. What happened to the promised telefantasy series? I'd like to know more about *The Invisible Man* (UK) and *Out of this World* than a measly sentence in *TV Zone*, which went down the tube (sorry) since Mr Vahimagi left.

I'd like to see interviews with stars and production members on past and present TV series. I may agree that something like *Gemini Man* or *Fantastic Journey* were a load of dross. But there are people out there who like them and probably turn to what purports to be 'their magazine' in vain. Sounds similar to your case for *Zombie* and *gore* coverage I believe. What's good for the goose is good for the gander, as my old gaffer used to say!

On the subject of radio. You did well for *Star Wars* fans with your article on that radio series. But seem to have forsaken Tolkien fans by totally ignoring the BBC's superb *Lord of the Rings*. (And Hordes of the Things for that matter—good as Hitchhikers' any day). I wanted to read what Ian Holm, Michael Horden or/and Robert Stephens had to say about it. Please do something on this excellent series. And don't let anymore radio shows slip through your fingers. (*First Man in the Moon?* *Sherlock Holmes V Dracula?*)

Finally... I suggest any more 'Fantasy female' ideas take the form of eye catching covers, back cover pin ups, or even sexy calendars in the centre!!! But no more of those silly juvenile articles! Those sort of covers sell *Mediascene Preview*. Especially the Sybil Danning issue—not surprisingly!

Paul Hickling,
Hoyland,
Barnsley.

FLICKERS

YES SIR THE VIDEO UNIT HAS COME ALONG WAA, BUT IT'S NEVER REALLY MATCHED UP TO THE WONDER OF A NIGHT AT THE CINEMA - UNTIL NOW!

NOW WE CAN GUARANTEE THAT EXTRA-SPECIAL-CINEMA-VISIT- FEELING RIGHT IN YOUR OWN LIVING ROOM...

FOR NO EXTRA CHARGE WE INSTALL ONE OF THESE BIG-STUPID-BERKS-EATING-NOISH-POPCORN TO SIT IN FRONT OF YOUR SCREEN!

tim quinn
&
dicky howett



WEIGHTY

Latest book about the American-Russian space race is also more weighty than weightless. In short, that past master of the great American novel, that's to say the great, big and heavy American novel—heavy to actually transport, not heavy in intellectual philosophy—is at it again. Space is the latest, encyclopaedic-sized (622 pages) instant best-seller from James A. Michener, the veteran author who gave us (and Hollywood) *South Pacific*, *Hawaii* and *Dynasty* (not the Joan Collins soap-opera, the 1976 David Frost tele-movie with Harrison Ford as one of Sarah Miles' sons!). Inevitably some Frostian entrepreneur must have snapped up rights to film, or mini-series the book. It has enough characters and happenings for six soaps. As usual, "what he lacks in style, he makes up in scope," as American critic Anatole Broyard saw it.

We should not belittle Michener too much. He knows his subject well—which is why he was appointed to the NASA advisory council in 1979. I just prefer my history to be real and not fictionalised, let alone swash in telly-dust. He covers an almost galactic-sized tapestry from Americans bringing Werner Von Braun back alive from the dying embers of World War II to the success of the Shuttle. There are, perhaps inevitably shadows (but pale) of Tom Wolfe's more factual *The Right Stuff* in depicting the US Navy fliers, test pilots who became the first astronauts; plus an overload of the John Sturges film, *Marooned* (1969) in their usually mixed-up wives. And indeed kids, who ranged from trumpet player and criminal to a ski resort's gay mayor. Slice through this everyday story of American space folk and the essential form of the book—"immaculate science" vs blah-blah politics—is sound and, with Michener's antecedents, I presume, authentic. But heyyyyy! Pick up too up too fast and you'll get whiplash

... AND LIGHT

There is a new sf writer on the American scene. And you know what they say, America today, Ireland tomorrow (Well, the tax is so kind over there for creative types). Let me recommend Alex Gilliland to you. If the name sounds a bit of a giggle, then so be it. Gilliland is a humourist at heart. In fact, he was a cult among American sf groups before he started writing—as an off and on cartoonist in various fanzines. "It was my primal cartoon therapy," he says, "which kept my disposition sweet and helped maintain my equanimity." Most of the cartoons ended up in a 1979 collection, *The Iron Law of Bureaucracy*. Such remains his target (after 15 years of writing civil service memos and specifications at Washington's highly bureaucratic General Services Administration) in the first three of his high-tech tetralogy: *The Revolution from Rosinante*, *Long Shot for Rosinante* and *The Pirates of Rosinante*. Cult-watchers please note: the books (the first two having won him a best new sf writer

award) are published by Ballantine's science fiction subsidiary, Del Ray, in New York. Worth importing. Fast!

In a droll, Establishment-baiting style, reminiscent in places of Kurt Vonnegut, Doonesbury cartoonist Gary Trudeau and our own young and lovely Douglas Adams, the ex-civil servant's saga is peopled by a wryly cynical hero and about a thousand students, transported to the space colonies for demonstrating ... against The Alamo being churned into a housing scheme! They're up in a rickety space station—and can't get back down due to Earth's damaged ozone layer; not forgetting, the appalling (racist) state of life and politics in the North American Union of the 2030's.

EARTH'S SECRET

A cast has been found (and, I hope, a new poster artist) for the film of the newest poster at Cannes last year—*The Secret of Planet Earth* (Starburst 51). Writer-director Andrew Sinclair expects to have the movie finished for Cannes this year complete. With hype like "It begins where other films left off." It is, as explained before, the tale of a trio trying to eliminate all the evil of this world by driving rubic spikes into the exact centre of the magnetic line between such historic places as Stonehenge, Easter Island and the Great Wall of China. That's how they take the race of Zimbabwe ... Telly Savalas is now topping the cast, which makes the film a must, of course. All the more so as he's persuaded Andrew Sinclair to find brother Gus a role, as well, baby. James Coburn Jr leads the spiky trio. Only good thing about it is that for once they don't drive the spikes into people but into the earth.

QUICK TAKES

MEMO to Steve Spielberg, Melissa Mathison, Carlo Rambaldi, John Williams and the ILM crowd: Oscar-night is April 11. Don't be late.

HONG KONG enters space race with *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*, in such a hurry they've no time for commas. It's called an sf comedy. I've every reason to think it will be.

TED POST is odd choice to direct *The Jerusalem Passion Play* religious film. Ted's best known for *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* in 1970. Still, he did direct Moses in that one.

MARGOT KIDDER loses her place in *Superman III's* flying arms to (no kidding) Richard Pryor. The film is missing and already up for tv sales and Margot has been discussing her career at a Vancouver screen performers seminar. Must have been a short evening.

DAVID LYNCH has settled location sites for *Dino De-Dum-Dum's Dune*. They're doing it down Mexico way.

LUNDA BLAIR went bare to exorcise her puppyfat *Exorcist* image with a nude spread in a men's mag. Well, she's 21 now; oui!

SIMON MACCORKINDALE tries the all-action route in Toronto's *Falcon Gold* thriller made for U.S. cablevision. His co-stars are Mexican beauty Blance Guerra (*White War*????) and John Marley, the guy who woke up in *The Godfather* with a horse's head in his lap. Falcon awful scene," he says. At least, I think that's what he said.

TITLE SWITCH for David (*Last Horror Film*) Winters' rip of *The Exterminator* with its original star Robert Ginty. It's gone from an oho-so-looming title to simply *The Survivor*.

ROGER CORSMAN won the retrospective treatment, with 17 or his

movies shown over Halloween night at America's first Drive-In Film Festival. In Dallas. Where else?

SEQUELS continue to proliferate. Alex Beck, the cut-price Irvin Shapiro, is co-producing (take a deep breath) *The Hills Have Eyes II*, *Last House on the Left II* and *Mother's Day II*, too. But ...

WES CRAVEN is not making any of 'em. Instead, he's into *Nightmare on Elm Street* this month. Cast: Four L.A. Teens. Cost: 2.5 million dollars. Reason: Cast is four L.A. Teens!

PATRICK MACNEE, John Steed that was—and on some U.S. local stations still is—is the sidekick (suave, natch) of ex-Vegas man Robert Urlich in his new—then again, not so new—tele-show, *Gavilan*.

INTROVISION gets a chance to strut off its impressive stuff again in a sword 'n' Quest For Fire combo called *Dawn of Time*. The technique still needs a giant hit to get off the ground. I have more faith in it than Hollywood.

JACK GOLD's *Who?* sf film, the one with Elliott Gould and Trevor Howard, was just opened for business in America. Jack shot it for the old British Lion in 1974.

RIP-OFF of both *Time Bandits* and *Dr Who*, that's another new U.S. tele-series, *Voyagers!* Credit, though, goes to writer-producer James D. Parrott-fashion? and his new find, Jon-Erik Hexum. Well, ethnic names are still in over-yonder. Hence, David Hasselhoff as Glen Larson's *Knight Rider* and Adrian Zmed in William Shatner's *T.J. Hooker* cop-crap.

NASTASSIA KINSKI surprised to find her *Car People* banned by the Argy censors. Maybe they think she's Mrs T's daughter.

MR POLTERGEIST, Craig T. Nelson, has joined Sam Peckinpah's comeback



SPOCK MYSTERY

The question remains open. Will Leonard Nimoy be back from his galactic grave in *Star Trek III*—or not? Yes, I know the next Trek movie is supposed to be dubbed *The Search for Spock*. And yes, I'm sure they'll find him. But will Nimoy be him? That's my point. Or indeed, need Nimoy be the right person for the role anymore?

When we left Big Ears, his outer-space coffin had come to rest upon the wondrous, instant-planet created by

the ex-Mrs Kirk's miraculous Project Genesis. We know this er, stuff can regenerate a barren nothingness into a splendid C.B. De Mille version of Eden in a trice. What we don't know is when the regenerative effects stop ... Remember when Bibi Besch's Dr Carol Marcus showed old Shatner a small sample of her work, below ground on Regula One? "The matrix formed in a day," she said, "the life forces grow later at a wildly accelerated rate."

Hmm! If Spock is among those life (or

death) forces growing at such a pace, will (a) his corpse be born again and (b) become just a 2007 star-child or (c) a lusty young teenager with an ear problem or (d) older than Springtime and/or the combined ages of the Enterprise crew ... ?

Therefore, will Matt Dillon or Ike Eisenmann be playing Spock next shuttle out ... or George Burns? Worth thinking about, huh? We'll know soon enough. The film's due out for Christmas, 1983.

The Osterman Weekend. Alongside John Hurt, bluer-than-blue-eyed Meg Foster, scrumptious Helen Shaver and the ubiquitous Dennis Hopper.

LUCIO FULCI calls his new one, *Conquest*—"a barbaric tale into the weird and fantastic." I bet! He started shooting October 18. He says title comes from Conan and QUEST For Fire. Oh those Italians!

BILL BIXBY returning to the box in a show with Mariette Hartley, who married him in *The Incredible Hulk*, only to die (of course) within the same two hour special. Par for the course in Hollywood!

JOE SPINELLE resting from horror (oh, praise the Lord) for black star Fred Williamson's latest scripting-acting-directing fest, *The Last Fight*.

CATHERINE DENEUE won't spend long in Paris after finishing Tom Scott's *The Hunger* in London. She's On *The Elephant Trail* in Kenya end Zaire, you hear?

WARNER BROTHERS promising a four-hour tv, sf biggie, described as a mixture of *War of the Worlds* and *World War II* resistance movies. If the biggie works, it'll become a smaller—an hour series format. Title? V.

GO FOR CUJO

When one Stephen King movie falls down, there's always another to take its place. Within a month of Universal's shock cancellation of John Carpenter's shoot of *Firststar*, Dan Blatt's production of *Cujo* began rolling in Northern California. Not without a little disturbance or two... The project has been such a tight secret that probably not even Steve King knew about a last-minute switch of key personnel.

A British pair had been due to be behind the cameras—director Peter Medak, from *The Changeling* (1980) and Nic Roeg's usual cinematographer (and Jaclyn Smith's hubby), Tony Richmond. But it was the *Alligator* man, Lewis Teague, who shouted Action on October 6—with Jan De Bont on camera.

The cast of mainly newcomers, except for veteran villain Ed Lauter, is headed by *The Howling's* real-life couple, Dee Wallace and Christopher Stone. Dee, of course, is Henry Thomas' mum, and therefore E.T.'s step-mum... The producer's choice of Lewis Teague as director is interesting as it closely follows on the news (see Top TV Movies, later in this column) that *Alligator* won such a huge response when shown on American TV; reminiscent, in fact, of how Carpenter's star rose after his *Elvis* tele-flick.

Cujo is about a rabid St Bernard (among other things) and is Lewis Teague's fourth feature film after *The Lady in Red*, *Alligator* (both scripted by John Sayles) and his deathwish vigilante trip, *Death Vengeance*—aka *Fighting Back* in America—and aka *Philadelphia Security* in France. That one stars *Alien's* Tom Skerritt in any country. Maybe, just maybe, 1983 will be the year Teague arrives.

FATHERLAND FANTASY

Encouraged by the colossal overseas business for such films as *The Boat and Christine F.*, the West Germans are gathering 25 million dollars together to make the Fatherland's biggest-budget spectacular. It's a fantasy movie, of course—*The Never Ending Story*. (No wonder it costs so much.) And, inevitably, it's British talent supplying the special effects. Brian Johnson, of the 2001, *Alien* and *Empire Strikes Back* teams, is in charge of the effects, with Colin Arthur creating the special make-up. The film is based on Michael Ende's international best-seller—a million sales in German hard-covers alone, and about to be published here by Penguin. Stars will probably be American, led by the youthful hero who goes back, not so much into time as into the very book he's reading—into what the producer calls "a timeless world of fantastic beings he's destined to save from destruction."

Six sound stages at the Bavaria Studios in Munich have been reserved by the Neue-Constantin company for the shooting, which kicks off in February. Director is Wolfgang Petersen, who helmed *The Boat*, of course. His producer is Bernd Eichinger, who produced *Christiane F.* As far as the Germans are concerned, that's one team that can't miss. The world, too, is taking great interest in such a pairing. Global combines are expected to kick-in about ten million of the overall budget in snapping up distribution rights for their countries.

In charge of his pre-sales work is the best man around for the job. Mark Damon, of Producers Sales Organisation, in Paris. He's already tied into Sergio Leone's comeback, *Once Upon A Time in America*, Sean Connery's 007 comeback, *Never Say Never Again* and the above-mentioned *Cujo*. For the moment, Mark Damon—the juvenile lead in Roger Corman's *Fall of the House of Usher* (1960)—is the film-man with the magic touch.

This German entry into the big-scale fantasy biz should be premiered around Christmas—in 300 West German cinemas at once!

007 ECHOES

And talking of Sean's Bond return, here's some of the gossip from the Villeneuve-sur-Mer set on the Riviera.

First, the title came from Sean himself: it's a paraphrase of his vow never to play 007 again. (It always thought the title stemmed from one of his meetings with all those lawyers coming out of the woodwork!)

Second: Sean is playing the Bond role with a toupée, as before, despite all the contrary rumours end that brevere chucking away of his "rug" at the end of *The Man With The Deadly Lens*. Pity that, for Sean is one of the few actors who looks good with or without hair, although he tends to have some either on his head or his upper-lip. He's rarely bare on both at once anymore.

Third: Producer Jack Schwartzman

says his brother-in-law suggested certain ideas for Lorenzo Semple Jr's script. Brother-in-law happens to be Francis Coppola.

Fourth: Scrumptious blonde Kim Basinger, from Athens (Georgia!) is recycling the original *Thunderball* film's chief girl role of Domino.

Fifth: Bond's usual CIA agent pal, Felix Leiter, is a shade darker this time. Black star Bernie Casey, from *Roots II*, has taken over the role played by Anita Ekberg's then-hubby Rick Van Nutter in *Thunderball*. This is Leiter's fifth appearance with Bond since Jack Lord first played him in *Dr No* (1962). Well, I mean, when Bond's about who needs the CIA?

And sixth: Director Irvin Kershner strikes back at the rest of the Bondian movies by saying he's filming this one with real human values as well as entertainment. "As far as I'm concerned," says Irv, "there's never been a Bond picture before." Brave words.

Meanwhile, as they say, amid the ritzy places, lush lakes and thick jungle of Udaipur, in North West India, Roger Moore is cutting his usual tailor's dummy dash through his sixth Bond, *Octopussy*, for second-time director, John Glenn. No one seems to be taking very much notice. Not now the champ's back. This could, should be Moore's finale. His last one, *For Your Eyes Only*, is reportedly not yet into profit—a first for the Bond series.

Both new films are costing about the same, what Sean's producer calls being "on Route 20 and heading North." Translation: 25 million dollars.

According to Sean, in *Time* magazine, the main difference between his Bond and Roger Moore's is that Connery starts seriously, then tries to inject as much humour as he can to balance the ingredients. "Roger comes in the humour door," said Connery, dilly, of course. "I go out of it." Welcome back!

NICE ONE, CYRILLE!

After his French Bondian film with West Germany's blonde Sybil Danning, Miles O'Keefe has a very tasty French brunette co-star in his British sword movie, *Sword of the Valiant*. She's Cyrille Claire, very much in demand since starring in *Alexandro Jodorowsky's* *Tusk* (1980). She started playing opposite O'Keefe's Sir Gawain straight after completing Alain Robbe-Grillet's latest slice of intellectual erotica, *La Belle Captive*, and helping top French pop star Michel Sardou into movies with *Our 15th Summer*. Shooting has been going on in Wales and Normandy since October 4, and once he's completed Bond film, Sean Connery is due to join the team as The Green Knight.

In truth, *Sword of the Valiant* is one of the fastest re-makes on record. Scripter-director Stephen Weeks end executive producer Philip Brown are basically re-making their 1973 flop, *Gawain and the Green Knight* which had singer-actor Murray Head and the late Nigel Green in the title roles. Also back from the original team, Peter Hurst promoted from second unit camera to

full cinematographer and actor—and *Raiders'* star now—Ronald Lacey. Obviously the moral is, if at first you don't succeed get bigger stars.

FEMINISTS RULE?

Something very feminine is suddenly happening to both Sean and Miles' spy and sword genres. Women are taking 'em over! Instead of a whole bunch of muscle-bound guys rushing in to follow Schwarzenegger, Lou Ferrigno and Miles O'Keefe—the way they did with Steve Reeves in the 50s—Jane Fonda's generation of superfit, worked-out ladies are rushing to pick up sword, shield end here and there, sorcery. Personally, I have no complaints at all. We're running a trifle low on fantasy women and Sybil Danning can't play 'em all (even if she wants to).

Topping the femme-warrior lists is Conan's sidekick, Valeria, alias Sandahl Bergman. She's re-born as She, in writer-director Avi Nesher's Italian romp—which claims no connection to Ursula Andress end Dinka Barova's old role of *H. Rider Haggard's* She. This is all new (!) tale, with great co-stars such as Quin Kessler, David Goss and Harrison Muller. "I'll need to be good if trying to oppose the kind of fighting Sandahl spent months learning for the *Milvus* movie."

Close behind Sandahl in terms of sex-appeal comes Lauren Landon, Mike Hammer's blonde secretary in *The Jury*. She's playing *Dunard* for director Matt Cimber, who was Jayne Mansfield's late husband. Must say Jane's chosen his star well. Laurena is one of ten faces of the future chosen by various writers end critics in Britain's newest screen annual, *The Film Year Book 1983* (Virgin Books; £5.95). "If it's not stardom she's headed for," said Paul Taylor in selecting her, "it'll be cult movie for sure. She could be set for canonisation as the latest 'queens of the Bs', perhaps rivaling the comparatively veteran Mary Woronoff for the mantle that hasn't really been picked up since the tragic death of Claudia Jennings."

To which I can only add that at least Mett Cimber is showing some sense this time. The star of his last two films was Pia Zadora.

On a lesser scale, sheer Italian spaghetti-rips, Sabrina Siani is making a double-edge play for the Queen-B title with a pair of femme-warriors for director Michael E. Lomick in Rome. She's the star attraction of *The Sword of the Barbarians* (oh yeah!) and *The Throne of Fire*. (oh yeah!) MacCoy is her sidekick in both... although the ad artwork of the *Fire* film makes it look as if Miles O'Keefe's Ator hero is back for a third movie.

On the espionage-front, while we await for fresh news of Sybil Danning's *Black Diamond* femme-Bond character, I see that ext(?)-porno queen Marilyn Chambers has completed her Canadian pay-TV thriller, *Angel of H.E.A.T.* And in London, Lindsay Shonteff is getting ready to start shooting *No 1 Superspy* ►

THINGS TO COME

This sounds like a re-tread of Shonteff's last spy film, *No 1 Licenses To Love and Kill*. That started ex-Avenger Gareth Hunt ("Tell Jimbo to get out of my way!" ran the ad hype. "I do it better!") This year the title role goes to a girl. "She's the new ad hype," says Shonteff's new ad hype... not that he's chosen her yet. Still, I suppose if Seen can re-make his *Thunderbolt* with certain changes, why can't Shonteff give one of his prodigies a new wiring... in skirts.

Oh yes, and just to complete the feminisation of spies and swords... the best Bond girl in recent times, Moonraker's Corinne Clery, is making *The World of Yar* muscular epic for Anthony M. Dawson, aka Antonio Margherita. Title goes, incidentally, to Rep Brow, unseen (well not much!) since playing Universal's version of *Captain America* in the 1975 tele-movie.

And the reason for this sudden movie interest in superheroes? Why, the Selkinds announcing *Supergirl* for shooting this summer, of course. Film-makers should learn to keep their mouths shut.

HALLOWEEN III

Hmpff! Just what the hell is going on down in John Carpenter country? Or in the Halloween village, at least.

There are those (not me), who insist Carpenter hasn't made a right move or movie since the first *Halloween*. There are those (particularly, it seems at Universal) who detest *The Thing*, which I happen to think is among John's very best work (If he made any mistake there, it was in not having a female member of the Antarctic crew). Certainly no one but John can carry the blame for adding such wholesale blood-letting in *Halloween II*, ostensibly directed by Rick Rosenthal. Now we have *Halloween III*, which producer Debra Hill promised would be low on haemogues and high on sf. What else with a script by Nigel Kneale?

Well, it hasn't turned out that way. It's damn close to *Killer Diller* in one sequence and guess what? Nigel Kneale's name is no longer on the credits! The script is now down to the director, Carpenter's pal from their third-grade school days in Bowling Green, Kentucky, Tommy Lee Wallace.

So what the er heck happened? Apparently, it all started like this. Nigel Kneale was in Hollywood working on the proposed John Landis 3-D re-tread of *The Creature From The Black Lagoon* at Universal. Whether Carpenter realised the creator of his idolised *Quatermass* stories was in town or not, Joe Dante did. Joe is another *Quatermass* buff and had been due to make the third *Halloween* number at one time down the pike. Anyway, Joe told John that Nige was around. Everyone got together, and with the collapse of *Black Lagoon*, Kneale came back home and wrote *Halloween III*—"with blinding speed", according to Wallace.

Tommy had by this time been given the film, so he tinkered about with the scenario; so did Carpenter. Suffice to

say, what they finished up with was not Kneale's tale anymore, so off came his name. None of which seems to trouble Wallace, Carpenter or Debra Hill.

"Everybody decided early on to change directions from the first two films," says Wallace. Yes, yes, we know that; I've reported that. "I think everybody wanted a breath of fresh air." Yes, yes, and Jamie Lee didn't want to tango anymore, we get the picture, Tom, but why...? "This one involved science fiction and fantasy (oh, really?), which are areas I'm very fond of. This is turning a corner with the material, which opened up many more possibilities because you didn't have to follow the same story."

Yes, yes; when a director starts repeating himself like that you get the feeling he's trying to convince himself (rather than us) that the result is all right. Sadly it isn't. While it was time, clearly, for the *Halloween* saga to take a new direction with new (film-making) blood, this hackneyed old number about a mad toy-maker is hardly what's required. Den D'Heerily is the nutter. Tom Atkins and Stefanie Nelkin are the couple

finding out the truth, which has been glaring them in the face from their first frame. Tom Burman created the make-up effects and John C. supplied the music, in partnership with Alan Howarth. The sole connection between this and the other two, by the way, is that the nutter makes Halloween masks. The next chapter should feature a guy who makes Halloween movies! The sooner John takes a rest with his *El Diablo* Western, the better. (Instead, he's making an Eastern, the long decorated *Ninja*).

Perhaps the worst thing about the entire 96-minute movie is that Universal had the gell to show it to the Press at their own viewing facilities in Universal City. In the *salle* called... The Alfred Hitchcock Theatre. Enough to make The Master rise up and devour everyone in sight.

HALLOWEEN II

...by the way, is the first Thorn E.M.I. video-cassette released in Britain with encoded stereo sound. All the better to hear Jamie Lee scream with, my dear...

HALLOWEEN IV

As Carpenter and Co move away from their original setting, the Sebastians—Ferd and Beverly—are planning to move in. Before this ex-sf-film team's cameras at the moment is a little thingy called... *Trick or Treat*. A case, I guess, of... Don't answer the door!

WHICH WITCH?

Carpenter clatters turning up in force to see the new *Halloween* sub-titled *Season of the Witch*—had a shock when sitting down in some American cinemas in the premiere week's business. Instead of Carpenter, they found they were watching a 1973 George Romero film, *Hungry Wives*, which later became titled *Jack's Wife* and for some reason is now called *Season of the Witch*. Not that George—or John—knew anything about it.

WHAT POWERS?

Six months late following the fire accident on the set, *The Powers of Matthew Star* (ex-*Star Prince*), has hit (well, struck) the American tube. We'll have it here, maybe even before you read this. If so, it's a pity. Because (a) it's no good and (b) you won't have been warned off in time. What we have here, friends, is not so much a successor to *Six Million Dollar Man*, as first telerumours put it, but a kind of... well, *The Fugitive* and *Robin Star* and his faithful sidekick-cum-bodyguard, Louis Gossett, Jr., are chased around earth (the American bit), by enemies of their planet, Quedris. They settled, *Mark*-style, in a small Clark Kentish town of Crestbridge, where our young hero goes to high school and hits it off with pert Amy Steel. Each week, at 6250,000 dollars an hour, Star gets to use his telekinetic powers (oh, is that all?) to save schoolkids or townsfolk from fates worse than runaway buses; or himself and his mate Gossett from their main Quedrian adversary, played by Judson Scott. In fact, what it really is, for all its *Superboy* overtones is Paramount TV's replacement for *Mark* and *Mindy*. Except the laughs are not intentional.

It's hard to believe that this Lou Gossett is the same Emmy-award winner from *Roots* and probably due for an Oscar for his strident drill instructor in *An Officer and a Gentleman*. As for poor Peter Berton as our hero, he's having a rough entry into tele-stardom. He was badly burnt in that accident months ago. Now that his show is on the road, he's been burnt anew by the critics. As Jay Cocks said, in *Time* magazine, "Berton is so reminiscent of Donny Osmond that the viewer keeps waiting for him to levitate a can of Hawaiian Punch while whistling God Bless America."

It could last longer than *Bring 'Em Back Alive*, for all that. And if not, Lou Gossett's not worried. He's such grabbed the lead role in *Jaws 3-D*.



XTRO COMETH

Time, if nothing else, to put right my dreadful mistake of calling the hefty (two million dollar) British space shocker, XTRO, by the odd spelling of EXTRO in my first Cannes report (*Starburst* 49). Sorry, Herry Bromley Devenport and Co. I could put it down to gremlins and the rush of Cannes deadlines, but it was just that my tripe-writer was suffering from the E.T.s at the time. Really didn't matter how I spelt it. The hype-reel of Harry's movie—with

special effects make-up by Robin Grantham—worked like magic at Cannes. Distributors from the Far East, in particular, snapped the film up. Well, they dig monsters over there. How *Xtro* will go down in the rest of what is now a Spielbergian world is yet to be ascertained. E.T., it isn't. As the revised poster art warns, "Some extra-terrestrials aren't friendly."

Nice line. But then, look what happened to *The Thing* at the box-office feller.

GEORGE'S GODPOP

Irvn Shapiro doesn't make movies. He sells 'em. Nobody sells movies like Irv sells movies. He's America's grand old man of movie salesmanship. A veteran master in the dying art of unearthing gems that the major companies have no time, patience, energy (or more often not that, understanding) for Irv finds the right distributors around the globe for them, sells them and turns them into winners. He's George Romero's godfather, really. It was Irv who made the world aware of Romero's comeback with *Martin* (1977). By chance, it was Irv who introduced George to his producer partner, Richard Rubenstein, when he used to work for Irv's Films Around The World company in New York. (Good name; he both buys and sells films around the world. The Brazilian industry would be dead without Irvn Shapiro).

Well, good old Irv has lately been annotating a list of Top Tan movies. Not in history. Nor even those of 1982. But the top ten of his long, rich career. His list ranges from Robert Flaherty's classic silent documentary, *Nanook of the North* (1922), the first film he ever booked into a cinema, to Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925), the first he helped publicise in New York. Also included, Renoir's *La Grande Illusion*, *Godard's Breathless* and *Scorsese's Mean Streets*. Tenth on the list? Why Stephen King-George Romero's *Creepshow*, of course—"a masterful use of optics and pop-art at its best," says Irv. More than that, it's his greatest selling triumph. Irv sold the movie to Warner Brothers in America (Stan Long's Alpha Films have it in Britain; British distributors rush to Irv's office at Cannes and other fests, knowing that whatever he's got this year will be worth grabbing. What with young Sam Raimi's *Evil Dead* and Paul Bartel's *Eating Raoul*, as well as *Creepshow*, they were right, of course.)

"Romero, like myself," says Irv, "is an independent. He's not a studio child. He and I are not opposed to Hollywood. We're just not Hollywood. We didn't object or fight Hollywood. We're both delighted that, finally, Hollywood has come to Romero."

And I rather doubt if Hollywood will spoil him, like Carpenter. In fact, I'll take money on it.

SENDER GOETH

One British horror-fantasy doing very well in America—certainly with the critics, and that's rare—is Roger Christian's directing debut, *The Sender*. It's a neat, taut, above all tight 91-minute telepathic (far from pathetic) trip, with terrific special effects from Nick Alder. Good editing from Alan Strachan allows no time for the usual sort of unintentional laughs so often found in such small-budget movies. And Christian's cast is excellent. Zaliko Ivanek, the hitchhiking gunman in Disney's *Tex*, is hardly recognisable, he's so good here as the title role youngster suffering from amnesia. Kathryn Harrold, whose career wasn't helped by having to play Lauren Becal

once, is fine as his shrink; Shirley Knight, better still as Ivanek's mother; and *Raiders'* villain, Paul Freeman, is the most believable medic taking over the case of the kid sending messages, images through the ether. Well worth a visit...

SUPIE FALLS

Bad news for Christ Reeve's latest film outside his red and blue Superman combinations. *Monsignore*, in which Chris is a brash, ambitious and corrupt Vatican priest tied up with the Mafia (not that far distant from recent headlines one might say), has been roasted by American critics. One never expected it to be a mega-burster, since it is made by the *Mommie Dearest* team of director Frank Perry and producer Frank Yablans. You'll remember Frank's *Other Side of Midnight* dress as well, no doubt; brother Irwin is much better with his films, *Halloween*, etc). Janet Maslin sharpened her nails on the film in *The New York Times*. "Reeve runs into trouble at the most basic level of acting, namely script-riddance. This is one he should have passed right by. Father Flaherty is an unplayable pulp fiction character at best, and he's meant to have a mean, calculating streak that's way off-base for the guileless-looking Reeve." Apparently it's quite fun, though, when Fr Reeve meets the Pope as played by *Amityville II*'s Leonard Cimino. They look like... *Superman* and *E.T.*

E.T.—THE VIDEO GAME

It's taken a mite longer for the renowned double act of Spielberg and E.T. to make it into the column this month—I just can't keep 'em out. Not it looks as if the stubby little guy (that's E.T., not you, Steve) is making a killing in the video game business. The Atari game—you have to collect the spare parts E.T. need to make a kit with too... you've got it, "phone home"... before he dies—has an American wholesale price of 25.50 dollars. Atari figure they'll sell as many as five million... which means 212 million bucks in the kitty. Put it another way, the game will eventually make more than the movie. Which comes as no shock, as the word from America is that Pac-Man has now earned more loot than the top four movies in history.

Sold with six background "fields, the E.T. game—created by Atari's Howard Warshaw, not Spielberg, though they did meet for a design meeting—puts various difficulties in our elian hero's path to get in the way—particularly if you're nona too nimble at these games. To help E.T. along, players can add to his dwindling energy reserves by providing his favourite Reese's (chocolate) pieces and have Elliott kiss him—that's worth 1,500 energy points!

Spielberg, by the way, is also connected—however briefly—with *E.T. Raiders* video-game. This one is so complicated it baffles most of the Atari execs, although they fear it'll sell better than *The Empire Strikes Back* game

which died the death after its opening weeks on the market.

Confession: I wouldn't know a Pac-Man if one struck me in the phizzig.

LEGAL ZONE

Much less hastily than the others, Vic Morrow's family have, as expected, instituted a "wrongful death" lawsuit in California, following the death of the actor in the *Twilight Zone* tragedy Morrow's daughters, Carrie Morrow and actress Jennifer Jason Leigh, are suing the same long list of people and companies (both film and chopper) connected with the night-shooting accident. Steven Spielberg is named, for instance, in the 28 pages of charges in the suit, plus Joe Dante and George Miller, along with Warner Brothers, John Landis and his company, etc.

Morrow's daughters took their time in the matter as they're not after financial compensation—like the families of the two Vietnamese children also killed in the helicopter crash. The girls are more concerned in pushing the safety factor for actors and stuntmen into the public consciousness and thereby forcing Hollywood studios, filmmakers and, presumably, unions to do something about tightening the rules. They've sure succeeded in the first stance of their plan. They hit Hollywood headlines by alleging that the defendants allowed the consumption of drugs or alcohol during the night shooting.

Meanwhile, five of the companies responsible for the film including Western Helicopters Inc., have been fined a further 62,385 dollars in a second move by California's Occupational Safety and Health Administration. John Landis and his Levitsky Productions are hardest hit with fines totalling 30,955 dollars. This comes on top of his previous 5,000 dollar fine by the same bureau, plus a further 3,165 dollar fine as one of the trio (Frank Marshall and George Folsay Jr, being the others) forming *Twilight Zone* Productions. All parties can appeal, of course. Meanwhile, the fines and the court hearings just keep mounting and mounting.

ALL BURNED UP

Italy's latest horror trip is *The Incinerator*. Which is where most of the victims and up in Piefrancesco Boscario's Rome movie. I'm sorry, Piefrancesco, but he's as unknown to me as his main cast. That's Ida Di Benedetto as a sensuous brunette being lusted after by Flavio Bucci as *il gobbo*—hunchback to you and me. Mr Ugly falls for Ms Beautiful, you see and tries everything he can to win her over... such as trying to make her lonely and dependent on him by knocking off everyone around her. Sounds like a *Hunchback of Notre Dame* number gone wrong. Maybe Piefrancesco Boscario is the Italian pseudonym for the *Metropolis* re-maker Ches Phillips.

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Academy Award winner John Dykstra has ventured far from his beginnings as an industrial designer to become one of the most sought after special effects wizards in the world. Apart from his Oscar for *Star Wars* Dykstra has garnered innumerable certificates and science fiction awards for his contributions to filmmaking including an Emmy Award for effects design for *Battlestar Galactica*. Dykstra pioneered new areas of motion control photography which culminated in the creation of a camera that bears his name, the Dykstraflex.

Dykstra's latest project, *Starflight One*, calls for him to create the effect of the first hypersonic plane tumbling out-of-control in outer space while the crew frantically tries to effect a rescue attempt with NASA's Space Shuttle before their damaged aircraft runs out of oxygen.

When asked what particular problems this scenario posed, Dykstra candidly replied: "We ran into what can be called the normal set of problems... untried solutions to unique problems that didn't work. No matter how straightforward a script is through the description of the effects... you invariably come up against this."

"Lord knows we've done an awful lot of spaceships and night skies... but you always try to better what you've done before. For example, on *Starflight One* we have used a matting technique which is called negative blue screen which we are patenting. It uses an ultraviolet paint system in conjunction with an ultraviolet illumination system to provide us with a

double pass matte. This allows us to photograph shiny ships end matte them over neutral colour backgrounds.

"This has been very difficult in the past because in the original blue screen technique we could not fully light the model because any shiny or reflective spots on the ship would tend to go blue and disappear into the matte or back-ground.

"We've also used a slightly different contrast ratio than is normally used. We increased the contrast ratio between the lightest and darkest parts of the scene so that the fill ratio (or lighted side) is four times brighter than the shadowed side. Generally this kind of work is shot with a 3 to 1 or 2.5 to 1 ratio. The 4 to 1 ratio looks more realistic but also brings up another problem.

"Traditionally, not only in movies but in real life, spacecrafts, with their high-contrast lighting ratios, tend to lose scale. If you look at the Columbia Space Shuttle, for instance, it's much, much bigger than you would imagine. It's five or six stories tall though it looks like it's about a story-and-a-half tall. With the windows of immense size, you get the illusion that this spacecraft is much smaller than it is."

One way of showing the immense scale of such space vehicles is illustrated in the exciting space walk sequences in *Starflight One*. Live action intercut with marionettes against the exterior ship adds dimension to both the screen and story.

"Special effects are just a device to tell the story. The particular difficulty in using puppets is that to

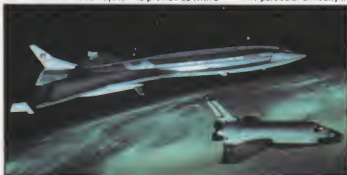
make the wires disappear you have to polarize the light. The puppets are shot with an overcrank frame rate set against a blue screen. Because of this speed (36 frames per second) the small f-stop needed to hold the depth of field on the miniature puppets, we had illuminate the scene with 6,700 foot-candles, which is essentially sunlight. It was a 'hot' set in every sense of the word, especially since it was 110 degrees outside. But it was worth it, as we ended up with very attractive looking sequences for a fraction cost of using animatronics."

The *Starflight One* space ship is not just science fiction, but science fact. The hypersonic principles used in the film's storyline already are practiced in fact with the supersonic transport planes (SST's).

"My world of science fiction is not aimed at whether a man can get to the stars or not, but rather if he can figure out what to do when he gets there. The space programme means to me that there is a hope and potential to learn rather than clutching to this little piece of ground that we have."

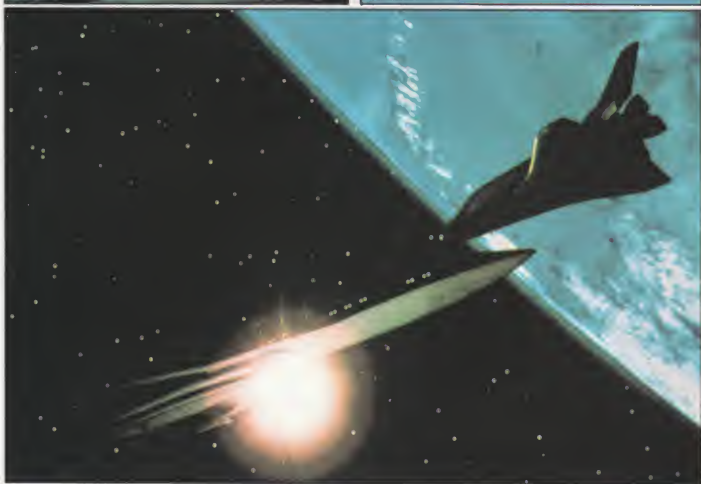
"That's what I look to science fiction to do: to give people a little bit of hope, a little bit of desire to expand their horizons. Not so much for the purpose of profit or power, but for the very joy of learning."

Starflight One is an Orgolini-Nelson Production for Orion Pictures International, Inc. It is produced by Peter Nelson and Arnold Orgolini with Henry Winkler as Executive Producer. Jerry Jameson directs from a screenplay by Robert Melcolm Young based on a story by Gene Warren and Peter R. Boone.



STARFLIGHT

ONE



THE BEASTMASTER



Preview by Tony Crawley

Enter the *Conan* rips . . . Not that the old barbarian need worry his triceps too much over this one. Nor should anyone else. The only reason worth seeing it is that Tanya Roberts flits about in it dressed in next to nothing.

Known in Canada, where the handsome hero hails from, as *Conan The Vegetarian*, this is the PG version of *Millus*. Or to be more accurate, the Saturday matinee version. That's the Sat. mats. of circa 1933, not '83. It's weak. It's wholly ineffective. It's badly acted by people who perform as if expecting to be interrupted by commercials after every other line. It's obtusely directed. And it's really quite a lot of harmless fun—if it's raining outside the cinema, has become part of a quadruple bill and, like me, you happen to think Tanya Roberts is a joy on the eye.

As for the actual storyline, by director Don Coscarelli and his co-producer Paul Pepperman, that it's so muddlesome at the

kick-off, you can almost hear them tearing the scenario in twain and scattering it to the four winds. And you've heard that exact script-tearing sound before. *The Beastmaster*, after all, comes the *Phantasm* team and who could understand *all* of that one?

Their credo appears to be that as soon as the main cyphers are indicated (almost by arrows), who needs a story, anyway. Marc Singer, every tanned inch oiled for better appreciation of his (slim) muscular attributes, is the good guy—Dar. You know that, instantaneously, because he's young and handsome and could be starring here in a commercial for something like *Savage Cologne*—"it cleaves through your sword-wielding underarm sweat problem." Rip Torn is, just as obviously, the rotten old baddy, mad Maax.

Once we have that info programmed into us—it doesn't hurt—we can copy the film-makers and stop thinking and merely watch what goes down for the next 118 minutes of fights, captures, fights, escapes, battles, fights, and lots of real cute tricks with the

hero's animal pals.

Dar is very Disneyesque, you see. Has this wondrous way with the animal kingdom. He needs to. Most humans suffer exceeding short spans of life in his company. They're always being put to the sword, dagger or axe. That goes for Dar's Mum, too, although in a spurt of opening magical nonsense it is not she but some kind of Dr Doolittle horse-cum-cow that actually gives birth to our hero.

The fast exit of family and friends tends to leave Dar very much on his own. (Or maybe he just has a problem and needs that *Savage Cologne*). Hence the animals. His dog. His eagle—landing on his shoulder is cue for any other humans he meets to fall to their knees in worship. He has a panther, too, and Podo and Riki a pair of most enterprising mongooses. (Mongoose?)

Traversing the old mythical mists of time (very well photographed, naturally, by John Alcott, though what Kubrick's man is doing messing around with a piece of dross like this is anyone's guess), our hero picks up John Amos, still looking for his *Roots*, and Charlie's

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last Angel, Tanya Roberts. (Oh *that* Tanya!) She takes the obligatory nude swim in the river which proves that director Coscarelli went to a rather late epoch of Saturday matinee serials than Lucas and Spielberg.

Together with the animals, this trio set about bringing down the wicked Maax, his hordes and zombie body guards, from atop their sacrificial altar and bring peace to all except the ice-cream salesgirls springing into action within seconds of the climax. (They're too late. We should have a chance to buy the ices earlier — to throw 'em at the screen and bring back the real Sat mat feeling).

All this, by the way, is happening and remarkably bloodlessly in Aruk. That, more or less, tells it all. What we're watching, if we are watching it, here, is *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Or then again ... of *the Lost Cause*. Nice to know Millius' sleep is not being disturbed, though mine is ... by Tanya. Her accent and shape, like everyone else's, is far too modernistic for such a medieval movie. Her lines are quite gorgeous, though. The ones her body speaks, that is.



Far left: Rip Torn looks on as Marc Singer tackles a zombie guard in *The Beastmaster*. Left: Ex-Charlie's Angel Tanya Roberts livens up *The Beastmaster* in her role as Kiri.



A VERY CANDID INTERVIEW BY TONY CRAWLEY

sybil dannig



Starburst: Dunno if you know which magazine this is for, baby, but...
Sybil Danning: No, I don't. Never have time to read my schedule.
 Well... it's... for... your favourite magazine in Britain, tra-la!
Oh, Starburst! Oh, FANTASTIC! Oh yeah! Well, I've got some great slides which will be just *purrr-fect* for **Starburst**. They're up in my room. We'll get 'em later.

Sybil Danning doesn't need a publicist. She knows all about the tough business of pushing herself in a film business riddled with honey-limbed blondes. Nobody pushes and hypes like Sybil. She drops names and projects around like men's double-takes at her most impressive prow. Her own composed publicity handout sums her up. **SYBIL DANNING**, it begins in capitals, of course, **MEANS BUSINESS!** Never averse at putting her best features forward, her prose gallops on: "She may be the first actress to successfully combine beauty with brut force: Blond" (sic) "Dynamite. The fantastic physique can please or pulverise - sometimes both."

Now, ain't that the truth!
 All she has to do is brush up her spelling a jot. Although on second thoughts, nobody is going to mistake this "blond" for a fella. No way.

We met up at the last Cannes film festival. Somewhere and somehow between her short visit's schedule of hyping her Herculean films with hulking Lou Ferrigno - *Seven Magnificent Gladiators* and *Hercules* - attending Cannon Films' receptions, parties, and finding still extra time for meets about her own production plans - *Black Diamond*, which may result in a Marvel comic - and singing contracts with producers who'd sped to Cannes with one goal in mind. To sign Danning.

When she flew into Cannes from Los Angeles, she had two films to make. When she left - "I have to go, we start shooting Monday" - she had picked up a further three. Not bad work for a weekend. She was also up, as she put it, for Connery's Bond return, *Never Say Never Again*. Schedules conflicted however, and within a few weeks of flexing her muscular delights (so much more attractive than Lou Ferrigno's) all over Italy, Sybil joined the French Bond, instead - *Terminator With Extreme Prejudice*. That's the start of a hopeful action series with ex-Tarzan, Miles O'Keefe, playing victim Gerard de Villers' popular pupil CIA hero, Prince Malki, aka, S.A.S. (of which more in a later issue).

All par for the Danning course. If at first, the first film offer doesn't ignite - get the hell on with the next one. She was only free for the Ferrigno films, for instance, because of the failure of *The Fast One* motor-racing thriller to get into first gear... for the second time in about three years. Sybil and James Brolin had been due to take over the roles first given to Sylvia Kristel and Bobby Carradine. But a film's collapse hardly phases her. She simply moves on and chases after another one, or three. She may have been born in Austria, but she grew up in America, had a U.S. Army major for a stepfather, and therefore well knows the old Stateside adage: If you've got it - flaunt it! She flaunts and haunts the offices of producers, directors, casting directors. She leaves them not with a simple bunch of photos - although, God knows that could do the trick - but her own impeccably produced video-cassette presentation of the beauty - and the range - that is La Danning. It features clips from nearly all her films, including, but not naturally, St Exmin, her invincible Valkirie warrior of *Battle Beyond The Stars*.

"I loved her," she laughs. "She had a great code. Make Love and make War!" She laughs and throws her blonde tresses back. I drop two hot ice-cubes in my drink. I need 'em. Cannes is more enough.

It was the Corman *Battle* film which first introduced Sybil to Starburst; not, I may add, to me. I'd cottoned on to the Danning mystique at least a good ten years before that piece of wondrous sf nonsense. Mike Munn interviewed her for issue 31; he's never been the same man since. Two issues later, scriptwriter David McGillivray proving his later station in life as the author of *The History of British Sex Movies* in *cinema* magazine, wrote in wondering why we, or Munn, hadn't mentioned Sybil's earlier European soft-core sex-film career. (The reason was obvious: poor Mike was simply too shell - or Sybil - shocked; anyway **Starburst 31's** photos tended to illustrate that Danning was equipped for more than Corman space japes). Five issues later (38, if you're still with me) Sybil wrote in, enclosing photos from two of the films... If you've got it, flaunt it, again!

"Of course, I wrote," she says now. "I've loved all your coverage but it seems to suggest I was trying to come off as an angel and a virgin. You, or somebody there, said but she's done this and that... *Swedish Love Games* and *Passion Pill Swingers*. So I wrote saying if you're gonna talk about it, at least give the readers something to look at - don't tease 'em. I'm so glad your people ran my letter. I'm not hiding anything."

Hrrmph!

Okay, where we were... apart, that is, from greatly warming up this particular secluded corner of the Hotel Carlton. We were running the Danning saga down... Right! She was born in Wes, in Austria, moved to the United States at six, then back to Europe when her military stepfather was transferred to West Germany. She actually started out as a dental technician. Open wide! She was even hired to assist Europe's top oral surgeon, Dr Professor Franz Clementschitsch... and if you can't say that, you're probably in need of Clementschitschurgery.

She switched to cosmetology, and won a degree in facial treatment, pedi- and manicure and - ah body massage. She studied all this at the Buchner School, which also happened to be the booking agency for Austria's best models. The rest is inevitable. She became a fashion model, won magazine layouts galore. Director Thiele saw one underdressed spread - and Sybil became Lorelei in her first movie, posing prettily on the infamous Lorelei Rock on the Rhine in nothing but her blonde tresses.

She'd never figured on a movie career, but was soon in another film and that decided her to go about things in the proper manner. She trained for three years with Munich drama coach Annemarie Hantschke. Yet all her film roles were much the same as the first. Dashing, hither, zither, and yon with nothing on but her hair. She went through some fifteen sex-rumps, including the Dave Friedman's 1971 America-German co-productive send up of the *Siegfried* legend, which has to be seen to be believed! Nudity never bothered her, the lack of proper acting roles did. Things improved with *Whispering Death*, as a Rhodesian farmgirl; being Ernie Borgnine's beaten and pregnant wife in *Crossed Swords*; and the 40-year-old prostitute teaching Nathalie Delon how to seduce men via some rather lebo-looking games before being impaled by Richard Burton's hammy *Bluebeard*. (1972).

Rather odd to think that as Sybil was leaving sex-movies (per se), Burton was just

starting them. And for the *Superman*-makers, at that!

Sybil worked for the Salkinds again in *The Three Furies* Musketeers and Dick Fleischer's star-loaded re-tread of *The Prince and the Pauper* - she impressed him so much he gave her the sole female role in *The Salamander*, opposite Franco Nero. She made *Run, Run Joe* for La Loren's hubby, Carlo Ponti, and joined Lee Van Cleef and Jack Palance in a routine outer, *God's Gun* - for the Israeli pair who later made her name for her, and are producing her Herculean efforts.

In late 1976, when the film world was scurrying around each other's backs making not one but three versions of the heroic Israeli raid at Entebbe, Sybil Danning tackled the fanatical, sadistic German terrorists in the authenticated Israeli version, *Operation Thunderbolt*. The sexpot of yore was unrecognisable. She made mincemeat of Bibi Besch and Marielene Costello in the rival Irvin Kershner and Marvin Chomsky (or Bronson and Dreyfuss) versions. They'd been shot for tv and released first, which might have helped. Once the Israeli film reached America, it was only natural that Sybil would follow - and start cashing in her fine work.

In fact, she was well set up in business (in films and a import-export firm dealing with hand-crafted German luggage and designer dresses) long before her Israeli producer chums, Menahem Golan and Yoram Globus followed and set up Cannon Films in Los Angeles. She chased around town and grabbed every role she could. Didn't she though! *Cat in a Cage*, *Meteor*, *Airport 80* *The Concorde*, *A Man Called Sloane* on tv, *Cuba Crossing*, *The Man With Bogart's Face* (aka *Sam Marlow*, *Private Eye*), *Albino* (with Chris Lee), *Separate Ways*, *Nightkill* and heaps more, including one title she was learning well how to cope with. *How To Beat The High Cost of Loving*. The answer? By working her cute butt off, of course. By being, as her own publicity phrasology has it, "Dangerous, switching from star to character actress with no loss of effect or presence". She is a threat, shifting easily from hard drama to light comedy, avoiding stereotype. One critic declares her "very much... adept at risqué comedy." (I'll say!) "In an instant, she can translate and re-deliver her dialogue in German, Italian, French, or Spanish, speaking each word like a native - which makes her box-office throughout North and South America, Western Europe, Africa and... Hollywood."

Added to which, I should add she skies, swims, cycles, rides horseback, sings, dances (who can forget what her strip did to *Bogart's Face?*), is a gourmet Vietnamese cook, and plays a mean game of tennis, racquetball or chess. Even workout queen Jane Fonda would shudder at Sybil's gym regimen at the Sports Connection in Los Angeles. (Note: *That's at 8560 Santa Monica Boulevard if you're ever handy. Just phone 562-7550 and check if Sybil's working out. Well worth watching.*)

"I recommend it very much," she says - about her exercises, not my claxon call to voyeur. "It's dancing, weight-lifting - with Nautilus and also, free weights. It takes discipline particularly as Europeans are not as health conscious as Americans. Living in Germany, I enjoyed the beer and going out, having fun and never exercised. I did jazz dancing, that's all. But I had to lose weight once I moved to America."

Starburst: You were fat?!

Sybil Danning: Well, it's very important that you're *slim* in Hollywood, so you have to do something to keep that slimmish firm. So, I decided to work out.

That's probably why I didn't recognise you - from the stills of Bogart's Face. ►

I'd lost ten pounds then.

What happens? Do directors — or agents — tell you straight out: You're too fat!

You must remember the camera tends to add a little. I mean, I've been to Sophia Loren's home in Rome, been in the pool with her, had lunch, dinner and everything. And she is *much* slimmer than she looks on-screen. She's just not that . . . heavy. That's the camera. It's vital to be less, in order not to be more on the screen. So, just like I take care of my face, I have to take care of my body. Also, to be able to handle physically demanding roles — like *Black Diamond* or *Hercules 1 and 2* — you have to be in shape.

Well, take it from me, you're in excellent shape.

Thank you! I need to be for these stunts in Rome. I'm playing the Queen of Greece. She falls in love with Hercules and manipulates him, uses him for her purposes.

The lucky devil.

She'll also be fighting on the battlefield with him. We're doing the '80s version. This is not the 50s' where Sylva Koscina falls down and asks to be helped up. This is the 80s, where the woman goes to fight alongside her man. I think that's what women want to see today. I mean, they're doing *Supergirl*, *Sheena, Queen of the Jungle*, they've done *Modesty Blaise* for television and I'm producing a picture that's . . .

Yeah, we'll get to that. Can we just stay with your films with Lou Ferrigno for a second . . . They came out of the blue, really. I've had a lot of offers, like *The Barbarians* at New World. Roger Corman wants me to do that. He called me to say he had a role for an ex-Valkyrie! When the script arrived, I wasn't too happy with it and wanted it re-written. Meanwhile, *Hercules* came up.

And doubled itself into two films.

Yeah, we start, as you probably know from Lou, with *The Seven Magnificent Gladiators*: both films look good. I've done three others for Menahem Golan, as you know: *Operation Thunderbolt*, the *God's Gun* Western, and *The Swap*, which is also with Robert De Niro. (Which is a clever way of saying *Sybil's* role, and may others, have been added to an old, very old De Niro film, *Golan and Globus suddenly found in the vault of the Cannon company they'd bought*). So I'm sort of part of the Cannon family and Menahem said, "You're right for these films . . ." We start Monday. I think the men will love and hate my roles. The women with certainly love them both.

How are you with swords?

Silly!

Silly question.

No, I've been training for months at the Faulkner School in Los Angeles. And I survived. We're using swords like the *Conan* ones. Sort of middle-sized. In *Gladiators*, a whip is my death weapon. All the costumes will be in the style of *Conan*. Very much the barbaric look.

What did you think of Conan?

Loved it! I know Arnold. He's an old friend of mine being from Austria, too. He was very good and I was very impressed by Sandahl Bergman's performance. She really knows how to handle a sword. Of course, when you go to a Millius film, you don't go to see a psychological film, you don't get into the characters, you just accept it for what it is. And it's spectacular!

And that's the trend for '83?

Looks like the trend . . . not just barbarian pictures but anything in a comic-book or fantasy style, and for the whole family. *Supergirl*, *Sheena, Jane, Mandrake the Magician*, *Bond* — they're all fantasy, either escaping into the future, as we're doing *Hercules* really, with special effects from the

Star Wars people, or going into the past. But away from reality. With all of today's economic problems, the world doesn't want heavy, depressing, psychological films. We have enough of that in life. When times are bad like now, the cinema has always been the perfect form of escape. And the best way to really escape is fantasy. Past or present. Everything repeats itself, so it's either one or the other.

Well, you can take it from me, it's the Starburst view that you make one helluva fantasy woman.

Thank you again. But I try to play all parts. For example, in between lunch, Italian television and preparing for you and the next interview today, I've just signed contracts for two other films. Michael Ullman's *Thor The Conqueror* in Rome and *Shanghai Corridor* in Berlin, Hong Kong and Yugoslavia — they want Chuck Norris for it. And there's a possible third one, *Design*, set in the fashion world, with Morgan Fairchild and Burt Lancaster. If they all come off, I'll be playing villainesses in all of them.

That's your new schick, is it? Baddies are always the best roles.

They're fun to do. They started for me in *Operation Thunderbolt* — we were nominated for the Best Foreign Film Oscar with that. Some of my Israeli friends saw it and said, "Oh, Sybil! We love you but we hated you in that!" It's great to stir emotions like that.

Blondes don't usually play villains. Not unless they're Klaus Kinski.

Oh, not you, too . . . I've just been telling Michael Ullman that you don't have to be dark to be evil. He'd said, "Would you mind

darkening your hair?" I told him, "Blondes can be evil too. I have a very big audience — that's South America and Japan: I'm not talking about Europe. They know me blonde, so I want to stay blonde and play against type." He said, "You may have a point there." I know I do!

You chase after the work, don't you?

Well, it doesn't come overnight, you know. Everything I do is the result of hard work. I've been in America four years and it's not easy to be a foreigner there. I was aware that there is at least 10,000 actors and actresses unemployed when I arrived. So I knew it would take a lot of work and dedication. I had to lose my German accent, for a start.

How'd you manage that?

I've a very good ear for languages. It's most important to sound American. I just picked it up. Otherwise, I'd be playing nothing but Germans. *Operation Thunderbolt* was lucky, it was really like my visiting card. When I saw producers and casting people they all knew me from that film. I didn't have to say, "Well, I did this sex-film, too . . ." I could go in looking the way I am now and they could see I could be beautiful and play character roles.

Four years . . . and you're already producing a film: or trying to.

I'm putting all my energies and time into getting *Black Diamond* off the ground.

Tell us more.

Six months ago I went to see Mike Frankovich, Fr., about a film. When we met, he said immediately, "You are my *Black Diamond*!" I said, "Please . . . would you explain that?" He had a script he'd written and developed, he'd looked at 150 girls and





good! I mean, you're my fan and I'm a fan of your magazine . . . I had no idea it was Marvel's. All the more reason to hope we'll still be pumping iron together after another fifty issues . . . Well, Marvel did comic-books of *Conan*, *Blade Runner*, *Raiders* and *For Your Eyes Only*, and I sent Jim Shooter *Black Diamond's* package as a comic idea. They think it's an interesting concept and are just waiting until we have a distribution deal. They need to know if the film will be backed – and promoted.

How's that working out?

We're having a second draft finished. I'm talking to directors. I can only say that Terence Young had to turn it down – he's booked up for the next year, though he did say he's given us suggestions and guidance on it. He liked the script and I'd have loved to have Terence do it. He did my three favourite Bonds, specially *From Russia With Love*. He has a feel for women. For action. And for storyline. He'd have been perfect. Now, I have two young men in mind.

Why men?

It'd be interesting to have a fourth woman as director but I want this directed like a man's picture. I don't want somebody saying, "Oh, we shouldn't do that, a woman wouldn't do that!" When I'm in a scrape with the villain, I want them to think it's Eastwood and Bronson!

Interesting about Young's Bonds: From Russia With Love seems to be women's all-time favourite Bond.

It had more storyline than any of the others. And a love story. I liked the development of it. Looking forward to Connery playing 007 again?

Oh yes, of course. I was up for it, you know. Jack Schwartzman, the producer, has my presentation cassette.

Ah yes, the famous moving-picture portfolio. Take us through it. It begins I suppose, with you purring, "Hi Mi Sybil Danning."

Yes, but in a clever way. It's a very dramatic tape . . . When I first went to the United States, Universal shot a test of me, directed by Norman Lloyd, who did all the Hitchcocks for TV. I chose a perfect piece, the auction scene from Neil Simon's *The Good Doctor* play. It's almost an eight-minute monologue – we did it all in one take. They gave me the test later and I took pieces from the beginning and the end, where she recites from Chekov's *Three Sisters*. She comes on-stage and is asked her name – that's where I put my title. SYBIL DANNING.

... MEANS BUSINESS!

No, *(laughs)*, just the name. Next, she's asked her age and she says, "What age are you looking for? I can be any age you want: 16, 33, in school I played a woman of 65 and was very believable." Boom! First clip. *From Operation Thunderbolt*, a great contrast from the young girl at the audition. Then, *The Salamander* which I did last year with Anthony Quinn, where I'm sweet romantic, elegant, feminine. Then, *Battle Beyond The Stars*, where I'm crazy, wild, funny. And all the clips have me introducing myself in the roles. Like, from *Bogart's Face*, where I say, "I'm Cynthia Ashley," from *The Swap* where he says, "Are you Erica Moon?" and she says, "I am . . ." that way they can see I can be different people.

Sounds terrific. You should release it as a movie-cassette.

Maybe I'll end up as an editor. They all ask me who edited it. I did! I took twelve hours to get these ten minutes . . . from my work of the past few years which I've been gathering for my private library.

Let's hope Black Diamond joins it, soon.

Cannon are interested in coming in on it . . . depending on the German money, which is Berlin Senate money. That takes a little time. I just spoke to Birgitte Zeigler today, the most famous and probably the only woman producer in Germany – I did *Julie Darling* for her last year, a psycho-thriller with Anthony Franciosa and Isabelle Mejias – and she said we might have to wait until well into 1983 because the Senate doesn't move that fast. We'll see . . . I'd like to do it in Europe because we've budgeted for Europe. The overheads and unions are so expensive in Hollywood. And it does take place in Germany. Any other news from the Danning front? I keep getting banned! My pin-up poster was banned from the World's Fair at Knoxville, Tennessee. *(She shows me a copy of it: white bikini, pink background).*

That's rather conservative – for you.

Well Knoxville is in the South and is very conservative.

But Pia Zadora shows more than this on her poster. You've shown more in your movies – in Starburst, even. We didn't ban anything.

At least *Starburst* has good taste. I'm glad about that. But I'm still banned in Knoxville. They said the pose was too hot. I thought it very wholesome, very American, sweet, innocent, not, you know, dangerous.

Was it because Ronald Reagan opened the fair . . . and might have strolled by the poster stand.

Could be. The fair is like a Disneyland in its own way. I'm too hot for it. Pia's poster wasn't there, either. These things have been happening lately. After *Battle From Beyond The Stars* was sold to NBC-TV, Roger Corman received about a ten page letter. NBC wanted to screen it at prime time in February but they say it's too revealing for television . . . none other than my costumes.

Pull the other one.

They're retouching them for television. Can you believe it? They're actually filling in parts of my costume.

And we thought cover-ups ended with Richard Nixon.

I mean the film's a comedy, you know.

I haven't heard anything like that since Jayna Mansfield made a film – for Terence Young, too – in Britain, Too Hot to Handle, in 1960. She sang a song called Too Hot to Handle in a dress called Too Hot to Handle. The dress comprised two obviously placed sequins and a lot of transparent netting, for the American release, Warners hand-painted more sequins onto the actual emulsion . . .

Pretty soon, I'm gonna have that title, too. Too Hot to Handle – that's me! Because that's not all. I was due on the cover of a major American magazine, with a big spread inside. I chose the cover shot which would sell this magazine like crazy. Now the publisher won't print it. I'm too hot to handle!

Nude, topless or what?

Nothing so simple. I'm in a wet-suit which has a decolletage that showed no more than I'm showing now. Of course, a wet-suit pushes the bosom together a little more, but . . . what's a wet-suit? And it's cut back here – no legs to it.

Like Claudine Auger in Thunderball.

Exactly. And I'm holding an original Walther PPK gun. That's it. That's all. Too hot? It's not what I'm wearing that's dirty, it's what they are thinking and think they are seeing. It's not me – it's them.

What would happen if you were nude like our famous Page Three gals?

If I did that in America, I'd probably be deported. So I don't know, maybe I'll have to move to London, Tony.

That's not fair.

Why not?

I live in Paris.

felt I was perfect. I read it and loved it. It's a female Bond. The villain is a woman, too. The victim is a young girl. So we have three women in the leads. It's all very much in comic-book style. Mike has created special clothes for when she goes into action – black leather for a *Black Diamond*, of course. In the evening, when she goes out – red leather dresses with high, red leather boots.

Very fetishistic!

Very comic-book! She has a special car and plane, too. She receives her instructions in the air. You don't know who she is or why – well, you soon know why. She's fighting evil. Like Bond, she does it her way.

But we've had attempts as a female Bond before . . .

First, it wasn't the right time; second, they were semi-done. As I told Mike, I think I can pull this one off if we don't compromise. You have to have a real Bond woman doing what Bond does and not having to be helped out of situations. She's got to get out of trouble by herself. I was fascinated by the script and I said, "Fine, let's do it. But I have to do all my own fights – except for the very dangerous, of course." Even Bond is doubled. We talked about it a lot, I suggested we could shoot in Germany, in a participation deal and Mike said, "You have so many production ideas, why don't you produce it with me?" So we got together and I'm working on it. I just received a letter from Marvel Comics – you know, the biggest comic-book company in America.

You're telling me . . . ? Starburst is published by Marvel.

Really! I didn't know that. No wonder it's so

THX 1138

Feature by Adam Pirani



The story of the film *THX 1138* is the story of its director, George Lucas. *THX* was the first professional film made by the man who later went on to write and direct *Star Wars*. Lucas is also now head of a huge empire specialising in film and special effects production and *Star Wars* merchandising – an empire so large that it puts him in the 'Forbes 400', a respected U.S. business journal's list of the four hundred richest people in America.

Born in Modesto, California, in 1944, for a long time Lucas's vocation was to become a motor racing driver. But a very serious car accident at the age of 16 crushed his lungs and he decided to abandon racing ambitions. Lucas was persuaded towards a film career by cinematographer Haskell Wexler (who he met in the racing world), who also helped him to enrol at the film school of the University of Southern California.

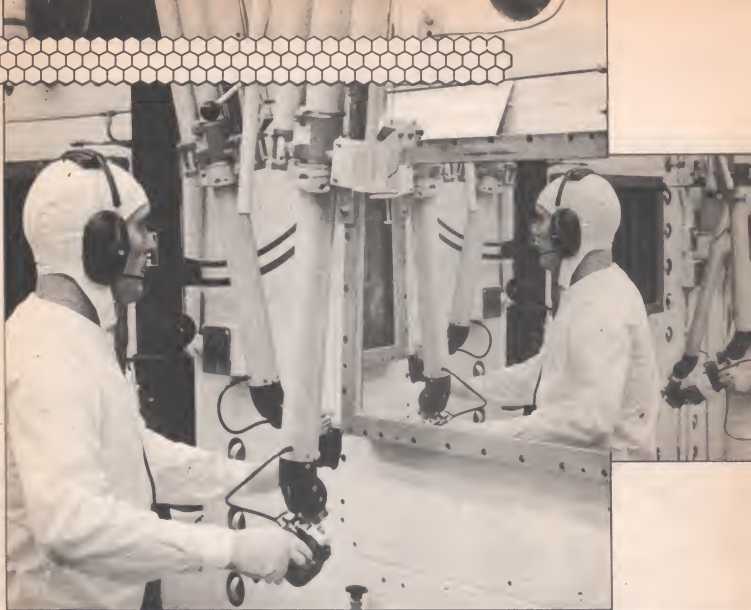
The film schools of U.S.C. and U.C.L.A. (the University of California in Los Angeles) are now renowned as the creative centre which in the late 1960s produced "The Movie Brats". This term, coined in the book of the same name, describes a loose group of friends who grew up from being film fans to become successful film-makers in the Hollywood industry. The "Brats" include Steven Spielberg, Francis Ford Coppola, John Milius, Martin Scorsese, Hal Barwood, Matthew Robbins, Brian DePalma, Welter Murch, Gloria Katz and Willard Huyck. Lucas learnt film in a creative atmosphere that produced movie-makers who have been responsible for much of Hollywood's quality popular output of the last few years, particularly in the sci/fantasy/horror genre.

It was at U.S.C. that *THX 1138* was first conceived. After several years as an undergraduate, in which time Lucas made eight highly acclaimed short films, he left, expecting to be drafted into the U.S. Army. However, he was classified as physically unfit and returned to U.S.C. as a teaching assistant. During the single term he worked there, Lucas assisted in the making of many student films, and supervised and directed one himself, a 15-minute science fiction short entitled *Electronic Labyrinth: THX 1138 4EB*. It was a non-narrative film, set in a futuristic authoritarian society where (like George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*) every move is watched and monitored by cameras. The un-humanity of computers and electronic codes is contrasted with a man, seen running down a blind, white corridor. Lucas has described the film as an attempt to communicate without using the narrative form, a film intended as a visual metaphor, a cinematic poem.

It was a successful experiment, winning a number of awards, including best film at America's National Student Film Festival. And it was the final film Lucas made before taking up several scholarships to observe professional movie-making, won on the basis of his skill and expertise as a student.

As part of a scholarship at Warner Brothers, Lucas was assigned to a film called *Finian's Rainbow*, directed by Francis Ford Coppola. Coppola soon noticed and got to know the young Lucas, and, recognising his talents, hired him as an all-round assistant on his next film, *The Rain People*. And when Coppola heard that Lucas was trying to get a project of his own off the ground, a re-working of his earlier student film to be called simply *THX 1138*, he stepped in to get Lucas the break he needed.

It was a unique break. At the time, Coppola was going ahead with his first attempt to create his own studio, and Lucas and his film became a part of the project. Called American Zoetrope, when created as a corporation in 1969, the studio's sole shareholder was Coppola and its vice president was Lucas. Coppola had attracted financing from Warners, yet he had negotiated a high degree of artistic independence.



from them – after accepting a script, they would advance money for the film, but would see no more materiel until a rough cut was presented to them. The first title in an impressive American Zoetrope plan of new pictures from young film-makers was to be Lucas's own film, *THX 1138*, which he had co-scripted and would direct.

The story of the film is based around the character named "1138, prefix T.H.X." ("Thex" to his friends). He is a typical citizen in a futuristic subterranean city controlled by an oppressive regime.

THX takes pills prescribed by the state. There are pills to increase efficiency, to remove individual and sexual desires, to develop a need for more pills... and to maintain submissiveness and keep the citizen serving the purposes of the state.

There are booths in every public area that THX (or any other citizen) can visit to gaze at a portrait of the holy-looking face of "OMM" – a mythical religious figure with answers to all the questions – a vital pacifying ingredient to support such a drastically anti-individual society. In the booth, the mechanized voice of OMM sounds soothing, loving and reassuring to the visiting citizen, asking "What's wrong?" and dispensing platitudes. Conversations with OMM inevitably end with a patronising "Blessing of the State, Blessing of the Messes," intoned at the supplicant.

THX's home is equipped with a hologrammic television that provides an endless diet of sexual and violent stimuli; on one channel, naked black dancers gyrate slowly and erotically to music; on another, a robot policeman methodically uses a long truncheon to beat up a screaming, grovelling man.

All citizens dress alike. Men and women wear identical bland white coveralls. Heads are shaven. Surveillance is constant and pervasive. Computer ➤



operators sitting at banks of screens watch the populace, looking for "anti-social" behaviour trends and non-conforming citizens. Seven-foot tall robot policemen patrol the walkways, dressed in black from head to toe, with shiny chrome face masks. Observation cameras transmit the interiors of homes to monitor consoles from inside the bathroom cabinet which the citizen must open every time he takes his compulsory pills. There are cameras that watch the citizen at home, at work, in transit ... everywhere.

The story begins with THX, the normal citizen, watching the shiny-skinned black woman dancing nakedly on the holovision, going to work, where (in an intensely complex job) he manipulates radioactive isotopes by remote control and so on.

But we soon see an unpredictable factor in his life, the woman who lives with him, "LUH 3417" ("Lush"). LUH starts by substituting into THX's diet different pills to those which have been so effective in the past at keeping him a normal citizen ... and when he has become free of the drug's influence (LUH does not swallow her own pills), she is able to seduce him and they make love - considered "an illegal sex act". Soon LUH tells THX that she is pregnant. But meanwhile, THX's drug avoidance is affecting his behaviour and he is no longer capable of the delicate operations required in his work. When his crimes (drug evasion, sex) are discovered, THX is arrested and taken away. He is carried unconscious to a new community where a few criminals and mental cases occupy beds in a huge boundless white area ... there is white blankness in very direction as far as the eye can see. For a time, THX's thoughts are obsessed with LUH. Then, despite his fellow inmates' admonition that it is impossible, THX decides to escape. He walks away from the community and proceeds into the white blankness. Another man, SEN, follows him. After walking for a time, they meet with a stranger named SRT, a black man who says he is an escaped hologram

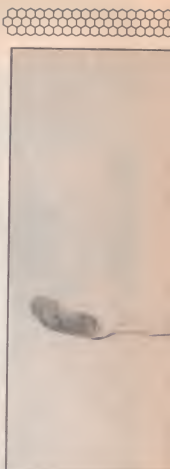
- "a hologram who always wanted to be real". SRT leads the two men back into the metropolis, but in a busy corridor SEN is lost in a crowd. Soon there are policemen on THX and SRT's trail, and to get away they break into a restricted laboratory. As the policemen attempt to get in to apprehend the fugitives, THX finds a computer console and starts trying to use the computer to locate LUH. With capture imminent, THX finally, sadly discovers what has happened to his lover; she has been executed for her crimes, and her foetus removed and kept alive. Because of its parents' criminality, the foetus is destined for "experimentation".

The two men escape the laboratory and decide to flee for the surface. But when they steal two police cars, SRT is killed trying to start his. THX is left to race alone against police motocyclists. When he reaches the outskirts of the city he leaves the car and begins to ascend a series of ladders through many levels.

Below him, the policemen are ordered to stay behind (a computer analysis dictates that to catch THX would be too expensive), and THX arrives at the surface. As a warm, radiant sun sets in the sky, THX stands in the face of the wind on the unknown Earth.

Unfortunately, even with this fine story and Lucas' innovative and talented direction of the film, the great hopes and wishes for American Zoetrope held by Francis Ford Coppola went unfulfilled. When Warner executives saw a rough cut of *THX 1138*, they did not like the film, and they were unhappy because they didn't like any of the other seven scripts Coppola had presented them either. They demanded all of their money back - at \$3.5 million dollars this was a crushing blow to a new studio with only one (unreleased) picture in hand. It was the end of American Zoetrope.

The story of *THX 1138* does not quite end there. When completed, the film was released by Warners, who cut five minutes from the film without Lucas' →





permission (an action which infuriated him). Critical reaction was good, but the film was not a great commercial success. A novelization by Ben Bova, a skilful science fiction writer and editor, was also published.

Francis Ford Coppola, *THX's* executive producer, went on to make *The Godfather*, a hugely successful picture which brought him enough money to settle the American Zoetrope crisis and launch him once more towards his goal of mogul status and his own studio.

And George Lucas... well, Lucas, who after *THX* was labelled "a cold fish" and "a science fiction director", went on to make a warmer, more personal movie, *American Graffiti*, which was a surprise big hit. Then, after years of trying to get a deal for the picture, he made *Star Wars*. Now George Lucas is rich,



famous and powerful – and devoted to making good movies.

THX 1138 was re-released in 1979 (inevitably advertised as "from the man who brought you *Star Wars*") with the cut five minutes put back in, and it can be seen occasionally in repertory cinemas. It is also available as a video cassette (for rental only) from Warner Home Video.

I liked *THX 1138*. The story is compelling and well-told, the direction cinematography and editing are excellent and innovative, and the acting is fine. It uses a common science fiction theme (the human in a dehumanised society) and uses it well. The sex scene is good, too.

It is interesting to watch George Lucas's first professional film and to see a greater expression of ideas than he displayed in the more commercial, more guarded *Star Wars*. His comments at the time of making the film also reveal a great deal: "The idea of the film is that we live in cage with an open door and that most of us probably just don't want to leave. *THX* is a guy who just leaves."

Lucas has since commented that he discovered that *THX* delivered a "message" too directly, and that it was interpreted as a downbeat film. If his output since then (*American Graffiti*, *Star Wars*, *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Raiders of the Lost Ark*) has been an attempt to create more positive films with greater audience appeal, then I certainly think it's fair to say that he's succeeded ●



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THX 1138 (USA, 1970)

Directed By George Lucas, Produced by Lawrence Sturhahn, Executive Producer: Francis Ford Coppola, Associate Producer: El Folger, Screenplay by George Lucas and Walter Murch, based on a story by George Lucas, Directors of Photography Dave Meyers, Albert Kihn, Edited by George Lucas, Art Direction Michael Haller, Music Lalo Schiffrin, Sound Montages Walter Murch, Titles and Animation Hal Barwood, Costumes Donald Longhurst, Location Sound Lou Yates, Jim Manson, Stunt Arrangers Jon Ward, Duffy Hamilton.

Robert Duvall (as *THX 1138*), Donald Pleasence (*SEN 5241*), Maggie McOmie (*LUH 3417*), Don Pedro Colley (*SRT*), Ten Wolfe (*PTO*).

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PROLOGUE

GEORGE ROMERO: I haven't seen it — finished. Not a full print. We had one screening in Los Angeles of an inter-locked version that didn't have all the opticals in. That was the only time I saw an audience we sneaked it for in Harrisburg. Then, we had a screening in New York which was... a pretty complete version.

STEPHEN KING: I saw it a lot more this time, it seems to me.

Starburst: But you stayed around, Steve. George split. I saw him hanging about on the stairs as if looking for a fast exit.

ROMERO: I wanted to be able to pace and smoke and all of that. After ten minutes... I took the train! You were nervous?

ROMERO: A little bit, yes. I think it's still shellshock from *Knightriders*. Not about the film. It has more to do with the politics and the sales. That's the shit that gets to me.

KING: And that's not a real audience in Cannes. I've seen it twice; completely. I saw it in New York with guys associated with U.F.D. and with Universal. Mostly, you know, hardened film people. They're a

soft audience compared to last night's audience. You could take your hot tea and pass it through the chambers of their hearts and come out with ice tea!

ROMERO: (laugh).

KING: They're really... oh God, they're really a tough audience.

Oh c'mon Steve, there was a lot of us, your kind of audience, there last night. You must have known that from the applause for individual credits.

KING: Well, we did get some applause and I'm grateful for it. Very nice. But I can't tell how it went down. I can't! I thought they were really with *Father's Day* and *The Crate* stories. Generally speaking, they were with most of it. But again, I didn't get a really strong feeling. Because a lot of them were buyers. Richard (Rubinstein, the producer) and I were saying. If you see a buyer leave after 25 minutes, does that mean he thinks he can't buy this for his territory? Or does that mean, "That's all I have to see, I know I'm going to buy this one and I can go see *Basket Case*"? Or does it mean, he's decided after two or three looks that this is gonna be way outside his league, price-wise, so what's the sense of staying? or does it mean he just hated the film?



the king/george conversations



1. ON THE BEACH

It is morning after the night before. Well, lunchtime ... sixteen hours after the night before which unfurled, in effect, the world premiere of the first George Romero-Stephen King collaboration, *Creepshow*, during the Cannes film festival.

At almost the same table, certainly the same "Plege sportif" beach, where producer Richard Rubinstein regaled me with the full ramifications of this devilish duo fest year - exactly 363 days ago - George and Steve have invited *Starburst* to lunch.

If George is, as he mentions more than once, still shellshocked from the box-office demise of *Knightriders* in America last year (so who's got it for Britain anyway?), they both now seem a trifle wary about *Creepshow*. The ebullient King buoys Romero up, when you've come through as many filmland tussles as King and his novels have, you learn to lean on the light side. Of course, they both know what they have - a terrific, tongue-in-cheek, shock-horror sting-in-the-teles anthology trip. They're not yet sure - convinced - if everyone else knows what they've got. And a lot hangs on the fate of *Creepshow* - namely their plans to bring King's mammoth novel, *The Stand*, to the screen. Not this year. Maybe, not next year. Just when they feel like it and have secured the right kind of studio deal allowing them to make it, their way. (More on this, next issue).



In a year that is so genre-saturated that it's difficult to tell *Starburst* and cinema apart from each other, what with *E.T.*, *Star Trek*, *Tron*, *Cat People*, *The Thing*, Romero and King have the biggest and best independent act in town. And, as it came to pass at Cannes, they're keeping it that way, not selling out to the big bucks blandishments major studios, like Universal, which wasn't interested at the outset, and now wants in on the film (to control its release) and indeed, as Spielberg later confirmed, is going to copy it anyway although they had insisted that anthology movies had all the box-office allure of a Ronald Reagan and Nancy Davis picture.

Such interest (as late as ever from Hollywood) is understandable. The King/Romero is a winner if - unlike *Knightriders* - it can win a berth at enough cinemas and alert its audience which, I fancy, should be well beyond merely the genre buffs. *Creepshow* is a '50s horror comic for the screen. Six King stories (four brand new), complete with panels, vivid colour and lighting techniques, even the body-building eds. It's an original. And a big breakthrough in many respects for both director and author.

It's the first time George Romero has worked with star names. Not Redford and Nicholson but solid performers: Hel Holbrook, Adrienne Barbeau from Carpenter country, Fritz Weaver more than making up for *The Martian Chronicles* (he's the star of the show), Leslie Nielsen from *Airplane!*; veterans like E.G. Marshall, Carrie Nya, Viveca Lindfors; relative newcomers like *Body Heat*'s dishing D.A., Ted Denson and *Knight Rider* Ed Harris, and other Romero regulars like John Amos, (aka, *Martin*) and Gaylen Ross from *Dawn of the Dead*. Plus, obviously, his production designer Clatus Anderson and effects wizard, Tom Savini. It's also George's most deftly polished, expensive (\$m dollars) and open-minded offering for the global movie mart.

It's the first time Stephan King has scripted a film in cohesion with a like minded film-maker he greetsly respects. It's also the first time King has acted in one of his own stories - although he says if he knew at the time he was going to play the role, he would have thrown a little sex in there someplace.

There is, then, a lot to talk about, so what am I doing wasting time with introductions to a pair we know so well, particularly when I've got *The Masters* on candid cassette. And why, here comes Mrs Tebitha King, née Spruce, joining our table. "Hey, Tabby!" roars hubby. "Hey, this is my wife! ... You look fantastic. Gee, it's good to see you. Well, drag up a rock, kiddo!"

Same goes for you ...

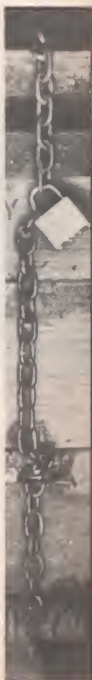
2. BIRTH OF A NOTION

You nearly did Salem's Lot as a team. You're still planning *The Stand*, together. So how, why did you kick off this great teaming with a portmanteau movie, a pack of stories?

KING: The reason this actually came about is that George optioned *The Stand* which is a very long novel. I've done a couple of drafts and I've still got a screenplay that's the size of *The Bible*. And that's cut down. Considerably! So, that's very, very long and it will be expensive and looks like a very long term project. We kinda wanted to establish our *bona-fides*, so to speak. To do something that everyone would say, "Wow! They work together really well. This movie made a pot-leaf of money. Aren't they wonderful! We'll give them all they need to do *The Stand*..." That would be great!

So we started talking about a lot of different things. I don't know if I shot my jungle idea up to you then, George, or if it was later...? Then I said something like, "Wouldn't it be nice to do a horror version of like, Monty Python. A series of blackouts. Very short incidents. Eight or nine. With punchline. Only instead of laughing, you'd vomit or screech or something!" And George said, "Yeah, like the horror comics." And I said, Wow! (He says a lot). That was like a reel blest. I hadn't thought of them in a long time, those awful, awful comics from the '50s!

ROMERO: Like *Creepshow*!
KING: So that's when we started to talk seriously. Not so much about a multi-part film but the possibility of doing a comic book for cinema. ►



How did you plan it out between you? Who did what?
ROMERO: Once we decided on the approach, Steve wrote the screenplay. And it was so close, we never had to re-type or publish another version. Steve went in and blue-pencilled a few things. But we actually worked all the way through the shoot with that very copy of the script.

KING: George took it in and did a shot-by-shot breakdown of each story. The one that was most complete was *The Crate*, where every shot, every angle that you see in the film was written down. Written down—not story-boarded?

KING: No! This is a storyboard that was written out. This is a writing person's storyboard.

ROMERO: A verbal storyboard. A shot list, basically. Without drawings.

KING: In fact, there were things in George's shot-by-shot breakdown that I didn't understand! They weren't in my screenplay. Well, they were in the sense that, for instance, it would say in my original screenplay, "The thing in the crate gets the janitor—the director will know how to shoot this."

ROMERO: Yeah, that's right. I found all these little, personal notes throughout the screenplay.

KING: There comes a point, you know, where it becomes impossible to say anything else. All right, this is where the director becomes the director. I can say, "The thing pops up out of the crate, takes the janitor by the left arm and yanks him in," and it turns out that day that the janitor's got a pulled muscle in his left arm or something. It's up to the director. The director should shoot that. That's the essence of what a director does to create suspense. And so, George had broken this thing down to where the crate falls over... and I could never picture it in my mind until I saw it. I never could! I knew that he knew what he wanted and so I was never concerned.



Don't you ever use a real storyboard, George—no little scribbles at all?

ROMERO: With the designer sometimes and with Tom Savini for sets and effects. Not a shot-by-shot series of sketches, no.

That's strange. Well, maybe it isn't for you. But a director is visually oriented and the only way to really explain visuals is to sketch them so others understand and see what's in your head and not theirs.

ROMERO: I don't resist doing it. I would just write it out. I generally do that work before I've seen all the material. We weren't in a position where we had seven months of pre-productions with all the sets designed and a little floor plan in front of me. [We had three weeks off between *Knightriders* and *Creepshow*]. So, I like to leave things a little more flexible.

KING: George is also very verbally orientated, more so than a lot of directors. It's one of the traits that makes him easy to work with. George likes words. When we were making some of the cuts, I found myself in the director's position saying, "We can cut this and this for this dialogue." And George would say, "No, I liked that line—that worked."

3. IN THE GRAVEYARD

Does that mean your breakdown itemised the scene of Vivica Lindfors chattering away to the grave, and all your cuts to and from the gravestone?

ROMERO: Exactly.

With the precise numbers of cuts to and from?

ROMERO: On her scene, no. [Laugh].

KING: She was a separate case.

ROMERO: But in the other scenes, yes. For example, where they pulled the grating off the cross-face of *The Crate*, and the shots of the flashlights and things like that, those were pretty much as per my shot list. *What happened at the gravestone then?*

KING: Vivica happened!

ROMERO: She just... she just... She did a jam session with it!

KING: We'd say, "Oh, Vivica, why don't we try it this way?" and she'd say, "Yes. But first we do this!"

ROMERO: She just started to jam. So, we just rolled a bunch of film.

Yeah, but then came the editing, and you cut back and forth between her and the gravestone... what was it... I wasn't counting, of course, I never realised you'd have so many... eight, nine cuts back and forth?

ROMERO: Yeah, a lot of them.

*And the jump still works—out came a Carrie arm and the people in front of me hit the ceiling. We know it's coming. But not when. That works as well in *Carrie* or in *David Lean's* classic cut in *Great Expectations*—both graveyard shots, also. I wondered if you'd worked out in advance exactly how many times, how long, you'd tease us like that.*

ROMERO: No. I knew there'd be many cuts. The scene runs now about what it was, in terms of length. She basically says what she was supposed to say. But it had been a little more intricate in my breakdown with bits of business with the props, like the bottle. I wound up having to use her and the stone, instead of the details I was going to do. I was a little worried about it—the jump, the conversation and one little thing I did with the bottle is enough to just lull it out further.

It sure worked.

ROMERO: Well, it's also quick movement—loud sound. That works here in *Cannes* along the Croisette, too, you know!

4. THE AUDIENCE

We'll get to the casting later, but apart from Adrienne Barbeau there are no recognised genre names. So what audience are you aiming at? Because it's tongue-in-cheek horror, isn't it?

ROMERO: I think it will have a large audience in that, it will still appeal to the 14-22 audience that is going generally to the movies. But I hope it will appeal to a wider range. We weren't targeting at any... we were targeting at us, I guess. [Laugh]. We were just trying to make the movie. We really didn't have any kind of discussions about audiences while we were shooting it. I mean we had some discussions, peripherally, but nothing to do with the style of what we were doing. We weren't tailoring it to anyone.

Tongue-in-cheek? Yeah. But a New York audience sits and laughs it's ass off at it. A Harrisburg audience sits and laughs at the Jordy story... and the rest of the time sits there and screams! It seems to play to both. I haven't really seen it yet with an audience. I've only the tape-recording of the audience at the sneak preview in Harrisburg. I wasn't there.

KING: You know the line when Hal Holbrook says, "The last time I saw something like that was in the movies." In Harrisburg, they don't laugh at that line.

MRS KING: That's a city line.

KING: Where they see a lotta movies

Do you know when you're writing a town or country line... I take it Harrisburg is country.

MRS KING: Harrisburg is very close to Three Mile Island, it falls in that arc. It's the capital of Pennsylvania.

Tough to laugh there!

KING: Down in your heart, somewhere, you know how it's gonna work on an intuitive level. That's why you don't have to talk about it. It's the producer and distributors and financiers who sit down and talk





about it: What's the demographics of the audience? If George and I were left to our own devices, I think we might have a sneak. But we'd never think of those little printed cards which say "Would you recommend it to a friend?" You can listen to an audience and you know, intuitively.

Would an under-24-year-old Catholic spinster like this movie...?

KING: Only if she's currently taking a penicillin product.

I'm pressing about your audience because George is said to have said recently, "I don't have a lot of faith in audiences anymore."

ROMERO: I was quoted as having said that. I think it was out of context.

That George, is the difference between Cinéfantastique and Starburst right there!

ROMERO: I don't mean in the way they respond.

What I meant was the audience doesn't go out and try movies anymore.

Movies are expensive these days.

ROMERO: They respond to what's being sold to them.

They're programmed?

ROMERO: They're programmed, right! When you think that *Stripes* and *Reiders* and *Superman* in the States made more than twice the money than all the rest of the product made – it's scary!

*If *Stripes* does that, it sure is. Ironically, one of your twin boasts is being of the tv-generation. But isn't tv the reason why today's film-goers are so programmed.*

ROMERO: Probably so. TV didn't cause me to lose energy, though. It just made me thirst for more. We were watching television when television was hot, of course.

5. THE BACKING

Was it a hassle convincing the money man of your intuition about Creepshow?

ROMERO: There was a lot of interest. Almost everyone bit on the line. Largely because of Stephen.

KING: And you!

ROMERO: Well, much more because of Stephen than me.

KING: No, no! The combination was intriguing.

ROMERO: But everyone came around sort of excitedly. Then we started to hear the standard line about anthology movies haven't been successful since *Deed of Night* (1945), blah, blah, blah! In one case, because someone owned another title, they said, "Well, if you change the title... we've got this title sitting in a drawer here..."

Which was, don't tell me...?

KING: *Twilight Zone*!

No kidding!

ROMERO: Yeah! They said, "Take out all this comicbook bull, call it *Twilight Zone* – and here's a cheque." We said, "No, let's sit on that." So we left Los Angeles (laugh) and went back to United Film Distribution, UFD. Richard and I have had a great relationship with them. They picked up *Dawn of the Deed* and released it without a rating in the States, which I was very grateful for. They financed the production of *KnightRiders* – writing off the problems with the distribution of that which were not all UFD's problems.

(Five days later at Cannes, Steven Spielberg announced that he, John Landis, Joe Dante and Med Max's George Miller are shooting episodes for a film version of... Twilight Zone! Odd how anthology is suddenly back in!)

You've seen the Milton Subotsky anthologies, of course.

KING: That's one of the things that made it hard to get *Creepshow* off the ground. Subotsky had given us – anthology films – a bad name.

Really! They're popular in Britain.

KING: They've never done particularly well in the States. I don't know how they did overseas. But they've been very lukewarm, Stateside. So, there was this idea of ours – an anthology film and...

ROMERO: "Anthology films don't make money!"

KING: I don't think that is proven. I think that with *Creepshow* we have a real shot at showing that anything can work – if it's done right! I just don't think

Subotsky ever did it right. They were kinda fun, that's all. There was no real fire, no flash to them.

ROMERO: That was my problem with them. They were just on the edge. They felt very much like television films.

KING: The indefatigable (pronounced in-doe-fa-tig-a-bul) Milton Subotsky owns six of my *Night Shift* stories...



6. THE EFF WORD

It's set more in a timeless than twilight zone. The comicbook stylisation, Jack Kamen's art, Jimmy Novak's lettering, even the music, has '50s overtures; films seen on tv, the first A Star is Born (1937) and W.C. Fields are more '30s...

KING/GEORGE (ensemble): W.C. Fields was actually in the screenplay!

...and then we have Bela Lugosi, Night of the Living Dead, Reiders, Clash of the Titans and Fade To Black posters in Joe's room; and Leslie Nielsen plays his murder games with a video camera in Something to Tide You Over.

ROMERO: Right, there's not really any set period. I talked to Steve for a while about the possibility of setting it flat in the '50s.

What removes it from that is, to use a quaint euphemism: bad language. In the opening, when the father figure is yelling about Joe's horror comics – they're crap, crap, friggin' crap. Very '50s. From then on, frig is replaced by the inevitable four letters. You must have discussed this.

ROMERO: Yeah, we did.

KING: George is kinda in favour of removing all the bad language, or at least toning, stepping it way, way down. I kinda stuck with it because I see any concept, like our comic book concept, as something to use but never be handcuffed by. It should be a place to take off from, a launching pad. I'm still not sure if it's the right decision. I know that the comic magazines Stateside now, in the '80s, like *Heavy Metal*, you'll find a lot of bad language and bare-breasted women. It's pretty open, now.

Horror, horror!

KING: I know it. Well, that's the real horror. That's what we're all afraid of. A woman who takes off her top! (laugh). Let's put it this way, we've had reactions from people saying blood is perfectly okay. "I don't mind my kid seeing that but I don't want to hear his eers being assaulted with that... eff-word!"

MRS KING: Good title for a movie.

ROMERO: *The Eff Word!*

MRS KING: *The Attack of the Eff Word. The Eff Word Strikes Tokyo.*

(Romero and Tabby start a story conference huddle.)

KING (laughing): We'd talked to Max von Sydow for Pratt in the bugs story, hadn't we? We'd also talked about him a little bit for *The Crate*, too. And the word came back... I mean this is the way things go. Yes, the price is... obtainable. But he will not swear in the movie. Well, fine, okay. Author will write out that Eff word all the way through.

MRS KING (back from huddle): We've got it! We've got Dino's next movie...

Continued on page 45. ▶

THE STEVEN SPIELBERG STORY

**The Spielberg Saga:
Part Three* by Tony Crawley**

* Part One appeared in *Starburst* 53, Part Two in *cinema* 3.

Media: How was *E.T.* made?

Director: *E.T.* was made out of love! **Media:** Could we have a little more than that?

Director: It was made out of love by all of us and led by a man called Carlo Rambaldi.

— Cannes Press conference, May 21, 1982.

1. SIXTH AND MAIN

Steven Spielberg does not give that much away about *E.T.* The film or the spellbinding extra-terrestrial itself, which gives an Oscar-worthy performance in the undoubted film of the hour/year/decade/century... strike out the inapplicable. The *wunderkind* movie-maker seems more reticent about this film than any of the other five features explored in this instant replay series of the life and times of the world's most successful film director. With reason. Because he calls it his most personal film. "Before, I was giving out, giving off things before I'd bring something in."

There's more to it than that. *E.T.* is rather more than Spielberg's most successful film and possibly the world's. It marks the director's re-birth. The start of a new kind of Spielberg. Free from old, self-imposed restrictions on style and genre. More confident than ever in the state of *his* art. Ready now to try, perhaps, more adult movies. "I'm developing a love story," he joked at Cannes "where you actually see a man and woman kissing in one of my movies!"

As he's freely admitted, he doesn't need to show off anymore. He conquered his name-called schoolmates that way; and now the world. He needs no more showcase, let alone deliberate (or *E.T.*-accidental) mega-hits. He can continue exploring personal cinema. Take a few gambles and fall flat on his *tush*, if necessary. He's hiding no longer behind his camera, from the real world, but examining it. Originally his reticence was a by-product of giving major interviews in America in the media blitz just before and during the opening days of *E.T.*'s phenomenal triumph. (He was so fatigued at Cannes, he more or less told us to go read *Time* magazine). Naturally, at that time, he didn't want to give too much away about the film, much less be drawn into any penetrating discussion of his future. He hadn't had time enough to take stock of the full implications of new position, ruler of his own ethnicity. He's sure of these new freedoms, like he's sure of himself — but he's not yet sure of just where

and what he's going to do with his liberation.

Since then, of course, came the *Twilight Zone* tragedy and more than ever lawsuits raining down on his multi-million-dollar festooned head. He certainly can't discuss these head-hunters, so he's kept far away from the media since *E.T.* started vying with *Star Wars* for the top film in history title.

He did, however, outline the inception of his sixth and main movie during his Rolling Stone interview with Michael Sragow. It all started, so he said, like *Poltergeist*, in 1980, while working in Tunisia on George Lucas' key to the liberation door, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. "When I'm directing a movie, I'm always thinking about things that are the antithesis of what I'm doing." And Spielberg had this germ of a notion... A combination of "the guys who stepped out of the Mother Ship for ninety seconds in *Close Encounters* and then went back in, never to be seen again" and the spectres of his loneliness as a kid in Arizona. Shy, a bit of a wimp, a joke at school until he, too, found a way of winning fans to match the sports-jocks — with Bmm movies.

He was lonely, too, on the *Raiders*' location. His girl, blonde Kathleen Carey, 33 was back in Los Angeles, signing songwriters for Warner Brothers' Music. His closest pal, Harrison Ford, was down with *turistas*, or the runs. So Spielberg talked about his idea to Ford's girl — Melissa Mathison, one of *The Black Stallion* scripters and writer of another Coppola production, *The Escape Artist*; this has not yet escaped into cinemas despite being finished in 1980.

That's the way he rolled it to *Stone*... Truth of the matter is, he'd talked to Melissa a month or more before, when *Raiders* was still shooting at Elstree studios and Harrison Ford's only runs were concerned with fleeing a 12ft, 300 lb fibreglass rock. One of the director's film-family, Kathleen Kennedy — a former San Diego TV producer working on Spielberg movies since 1941 (and she's only 28!), associate producer on *Poltergeist* and winning co-producer status with *E.T.* — had got to know Melissa well and suggested her for the script. Spielberg chewed on it for a bit and then "essentially pitched it, you know the simple premise" one night at dinner. Melissa loved the idea. Her response, however, was thanks but no thanks. "I've just decided never to write again," she told him. "I read what I'd written in England and hated it." Besides, although everyone now thinks Ms Mathison is Richard Matheson's daughter, she had no sf background (neither does the film, she says).



Cut to the heat of Tunisia. Steven and Melissa, just like any film-making tourists away from home, are busy searching for scorpions on desert rocks. You have to pass the time between takes... He broaches the subject anew. This time — "I couldn't mention it until he asked me again" — she agreed. Spielberg says Melissa is 80% heart and 20% story-logic. "It took her sensitivity and my know-how to make *E.T.*"

2. THE WHOLE TRUTH

The actual genesis of *E.T.*, though, goes further back in time. To another location. The

huge, dirigible hangar at Mobile, Alabama. To *Close Encounters*... with Francois Truffaut, the veteran French director playing Lacombe in the dazzling film. Back to 1976, in fact.

Truffaut, more used to minuscule budgets, was greatly impressed with how the then 29-year-and-two-film-old Spielberg marshalled the forces of such a *gigantesque* project, locations, effects, extras, the whole mega-kit and kaboodle. Above all, the Frenchman admired the way Spielberg worked with five-year-old Cary Guffey.

"You should make a film with kids," said Truffaut, who had, himself, lately finished such a venture. *L'Argent De Poche/Small Change* (1976), before reporting to Mobile. Spielberg nodded. He'd always wanted to get back to small films. He had one with "kids" in mind. But he had 1941 next, if he ever finished *CE3K*. After that, maybe. Yes, definitely after that... around 1980, *peut-être*.

"*Tres bien*," said Truffaut, "because... you are ze keed!" (Melissa tends to agree with this sentiment. "Steven makes his movies sitting front-row centre with his popcorn. He is the audience.")



Almost two years later, in London for the Royal Film Performance of *CE3K* in March, 1978, Spielberg talked further – during his National Film Theatre interview with Adrian Turner – about his overwhelming desire to make smaller, more personal films. "Not just because I have the autonomy to do it, which I do. I can make any movies I want right now, within some area of responsible reason. But because there's a lot of things I haven't been able to get into my pictures which overwhelm anything that really comes out of my heart. I haven't been able to show myself as well as I'd have liked because I've been painting on an academy Panavision screen.

"So, I'm going to make some small movies, which I always hope will be successful. I'm into making a small movie to say 'puff' on you. I'm just interested in doing some films which are unique and experimental, that really comes out of my heart – very personal." He laughed. "While I'm doing that, Brian De Palma will go out and make a big, trashy epic what we'll all love and then he'll resist his own success and he'll go out and make a small movie and I'll go back and make a trashy epic. Hopefully, we'll be able to leapfrog and make some good movies in between."

He had a title for his small movie, *After School*. He had a schedule and a budget – 28 days for 1.5 million dollars. He had a story, too. "It's about suburban children in America," he told us; that Cary Guffey would be one of them. "Gang of kids! And what happens between 3 pm when they get out of school and when they get home for supper at 6pm. They're really young adults, becoming street-smart, making love at eleven, discovering drugs at ten. And a lot of it is going to deal directly with the influence television has on children today. How they live out the fantasies of *Charlie's Angels*. How that becomes the most important thing in those after school hours."

He went off and made 1941 instead and burnt his superstar fingers for the first time. About time, too, went the Hollywood chorus. Columbia Pictures paid a multi-million dollar packet for that overstuffed mess. Enough, by Spielbergian budgetry, for several small films. Then again, cheap at the price for the experience it instilled in his work since then. Next, he continued messing around with *CE3K* and brought out his nondescript *Special Edition*, which almost seemed a way for Columbia to recover from the 1941 losses, except it sorely disappointed Spielberg's faithful legions, and the box-office. His image was suffering, until joining forces with his pal, George Lucas, turning their 1977 Hawaiian sandcastles into the basis of at least two rummy TV series this year, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

During all these highs and lows, the next time we heard about *After School*, it had become *A Boy's Life*.

3. EYES OF THE SKIES

Well, no, actually, it had become *Night Skies* first, all set for shooting in Utah, with George as special consultant, whatever that meant beyond the effects work going to his Industrial Light and Magic, and a script from John Sayles, a new, and for the moment, second league wunderkind. He was, though, finding it easier than Spielberg to straddle both sides of the thoroughfare, exploitation and personal cinema, being responsible for the scripts of *Alligator* and *Battle Beyond The Stars*, in 1980, as well as writing-directing his own, almost home-movie, *Return of the Secaucus Seven* (1979).

That was the package and Columbia would release it by Christmas, 1982. (Yeah, no kidding, Columbia held the inside track of what eventually became *E.T.*, hair-tearing news for the executives up to their knees in coke bottles and to their waists in the mire of the *Annie* flop).

Rumour always abounds around any Spielberg project, so it's par for the course that one story said John Sayles would direct *Night Skies*, his first feature for a major combine. (He has lately managed that for Paramount with *Baby, It's You*, starring Rosanne Arquette, the girl find of '82). Sayles may have been on the cards for an hour or so, but the original director was always due to be Ron Cobb, the big, bearded cartoonist on the *LA* Free Press, whose architectural and indeed engineering expertise had led him to

seague fantasy into movies. He's responsible, for example, for *Dark Star's* spaceship, work on the *Star Wars* cantina scenes, and most of the Nostromo, inside and out, for *Alien*. He first worked with Spielberg when designing the inside of Trumbull's *Mother Ship for CE3K's Special Edition*. Things didn't often go the way they'd planned on that and, as if to make up for it, Cobb was offered *Night Skies*, with Steve producing. The hang up? Cobb was long gone with his other mate, John Milius, on a little affair called *Conan*.

The bigger rumour, of course, was that the new venture was the official *CE3K* sequel. Certainly, the script had aliens returning to earth but completely contrary to Spielberg's philosophy (which explains why he wasn't due to direct), they were far from friendly, let alone downright lovable aliens. John Sayles always felt *CE3K* was too benevolent "there's no reason why the aliens had to be wonderful creatures." Hence his eleven monsters, which Rick Baker was hired to create. Or one of them at least, to see how things went with his new Anatomation process, a method of cloning puppet movements to those of his human operator. Baker didn't have very much to work on. Spielberg had been unusually sketchy, as opposed to sketching out the kind of creatures he required. All he knew was that the alien's capabilities had to be... unlimited!

Rick Baker and his team of friendly helpers started work on Scar, nastiest of the eleven (a rough mix, I gather, of Puck, the *CE3K* alien, and the (wizened) head of Mekon from *Dan Dare*). That was in April, 1980. John Sayles, meantime, polished up a second draft script, cutting the visitors' Alien XI to a five-a-side team – but more ambitious ETs, all the same. Baker's Scar, from all reports, was outstanding. It did everything superbly, except walking – who said an ET walked anyway? Spielberg found the model exceptional. So were its costs. Columbia, years off being rescued by Coca Cola, balked at the effects budgetting. A Spielberg film, went their theory, is not a Spielberg film unless he's directing, although that didn't seem to worry MGM's hype with *Pottergeist*.

In Hollywood parlance, the film-maker and the magical effects technician took a meeting. In olde English, the two geniuses had one helluva barney. It ended with Baker's all-American response. "Talk to my lawyer!"

"Firing Rick was the last thing Steven had on his mind walking into that meeting," Irish co-producer Kathy Kennedy, 28, later told *Cinefantastique*. "But Steven felt that Rick showed little concern with regard to budget and schedule. His work demonstrated some truly innovative ideas and there's no doubt he would've given us an extraordinary ET."

4. CHANGE OF HEART

With Baker out of the picture, producer Spielberg called up Carlo Rambaldi. Just why he hadn't called him in the first place, after his *CE3K* work, remains one of life's mysteries. Then again, Carlo hadn't been on the *Close Encounters* strength from the off, either. He'd come in to the rescue after Spielberg rejected Frank Griffin and Tom Burman's ideas (and Bob Baker's puppets). Carlo's new ETs, according to Kathy Kennedy, were more extensive than Rick Baker's. At half the cost.

And with Ron Cobb still waylaid by Milius where the rains of Spain mainly stay, producer Spielberg threw in the towel and became the project's director. And that is the precise moment when *Night Skies* turned into *A Boy's Life*, which stayed around as a good cover for what the film eventually, and very soon, became all about. Just Steve is more in tune with suspense than horror (the only part of *Pottergeist* that's really Tobe

Hooper's is the Grand Guignol finale, which just happens to be Spielberg's least favourite section) so the essential, visceral terror elements of John Sayles' *Night Skies* were junked out the back window and the suspenseful gentility of *E.T.* came in the front door of *A Boy's Life*.

Steve immediately fused John's five remaining aliens into one. "I had this image that there should be one surviving alien and just show him walking away, alone and afraid. What I really wanted to do was a movie about that little guy who was left behind... 'three million light years from home'."

It is William Kotzwinkle's best-selling book of the Matheson script rather than the film, that explains what *E.T.* and his chums are doing here in the first place. They're botanists collecting specimens in order to save our planet's flora from human destruction. (They must have caught Bruce Dern and Huey, Louie and Dewie in 1972's *Silent Running* on satellite-tv).

Whatever the reasons, whatever the title, and however much Spielberg was to talk about this being the film about children he's long aimed to make, it all sounded a long way from *After School*. "The idea of doing a movie about three or four or five young people expressing what they feel about contemporary life in America was not, for me, as creative, as stimulating, as what would happen if a magical person dropped out of the skies and changed one's life – for the better." Ah!

The project changed camps as well as heart (glowing red, naturally); moving to Universal where Spielberg, of course, started his supercareer – directing Hollywood's premier alien, Joan Crawford, in *Night Gallery*.

He was, in fact, still unsure of the project until reading Melissa's first draft – "one of the best first drafts I've ever read." She had begun work on October 10, 1980. Everyone remembers a red-letter day. Or days... "I'd work for a week, then go down and meet Steven in the Marina where he was editing *Raiders* and show him what I had and talk about it," she relates. "And I'd go home and work a week and come back and meet him again. And the story just sort of evolved. We had the first draft in eight weeks."

Well, of course, it did. Spielberg had been pouring out his heart to her, telling Melissa as much about his own childhood as that of Elliott, the film's hero. The kid who needed a pal – and found a pal needing him back. A love story, really. "I put together this story," recalls Spielberg, of *Boy Meets Creature*, *Boy Loses Creature*, *Boy Meets Creature*, *Boy Saves Creature*. With the hope that they'll somehow always be together, that their friendship isn't limited by nautical miles. "Eternal, as it were."

Nothing exactly new in cinema or written fiction, if it's not pure Disney – when did a Disneyesque kid use an expression like "penis-breath"? – it's close. And better. "If *E.T.* was made in 1937," Spielberg likes to muse, "I'd have been very happy to work for Walt Disney and make this movie for him."

The film has links galore, too, with Bryan Forbes' *Whistle Down The Wind* (1961; when the, er, creature was thought to be Jesus Christ) or Carlos Saura's *Spirit of the Beehive* (1973) from Spain, of *My Friend Flicka* (1943), *Lassie Come Home* (1943); Roddy McDowall was the "keed" in both of those, even *Pete's Dragon* (1977) or *Francis The Talking Mule* (1950), if you want to push it, why not? Charles Michener pushed it further in *Newsweek* to equate *E.T.* with Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (oh really?), while the easiest analogy is *Peter Pan* and in more science fantasy terms, Edgar Ulmer's *Man From Planet X* (1951). All the world's stories have

been told fifty times over. And then some.

5. FOR THOSE YOU THINK YOUNG

"If there is any parallel with *E.T.* and any movie I might have seen as a child," says the director, with hand on heart, "I remember one the one moment in *War of the Worlds* (1953) when Gene Barry was trapped in the cavern and the probe was coming through the window to seek him out. All of a sudden, there was a creature in the house with him – sneaking from room to room with his little hands in the air. That was supposed to be scary – terrifying... But I thought that was delightful."

"Many extra-terrestrials died between the years 1950 and 1960, when they made all those *Earth vs the Flying Saucers* (1956) movies. And I recoil every time I see on television a little creature being slashed by a frightened teenager. I wanted to express how young people feel today. Melissa and I didn't fictionalise how young people feel. We've a lot of experience with young American kids and young French kids – they're all the same. Everyone under the age of, I'd say, 14 is pretty much the same creature."

"I wanted people to believe in something. It's a happily pacifistic film. And I thought the spirit of youth, so to speak, is sort of in every person. Everybody can identify with their own childhood. To have an *E.T.* in your life just keeps you young all your life. I think you have to believe in something..."

E.T. is what Spielberg has believed in for years, Part Three of the Spielbergian Philosophy of Life Forms From Up There; friendly, not antagonistic.

"I've been waiting for Hollywood to leave me alone and stop forcing me to make these 30-million dollar movies," he insisted at Cannes, "so I can get around to making something I really wanted to make. Because this is a story I've always wanted to tell and I've been threatening, as you probably know from interviews I've done in the past, to make a movie involving young people. This is finally the threat realised."

"It's a contemporary science-fiction fairy tale. It's about human values. It's about the understanding people have towards one another. It's about compassion and love. They share so much of what they know about their own environment with each other and they come to have a great understanding for each other's problems. Elliott understands that *E.T.* is lonely and has to get home to survive, that he must save *E.T.*'s life. *E.T.* senses that Elliott is a victim of a separated household. His father's in Mexico with another woman and his mother's trying to recover from the trauma of the separation. Within a suburban American household, Elliott's an abandoned child."

"The main threat is the fact that perhaps this creature can't live too long in this environment. It's the atmosphere, the air, the biology, the chemistry, beware-of-the-water, whatever. Without a space suit, it's very hard for this creature to survive on this planet without periods of renewal and some kinda decompression. He was never intended to survive indefinitely in this environment. And so the real threat, the main threat in the story is going to be his health and his wanting to go home."

"But then there's a sub-threat that joins the story together and gives a real tempo to the film. And that is that there are people who know one of these creatures was left behind and they're looking for him. I'm never too clear who these people are... We just know it's a group and they're hot on his trail,

looking for every and all clues concerning *E.T.*'s whereabouts. That story provides the rhythm of the movie. It essentially puts a metronome on the film, that ticks faster and faster until the climax. And this is the overwhelming jeopardy that threatens to blow his cover, expose where he's living and separate him from the children who've come to love him so much..."

As Truffaut would be first to say, Spielberg is very much Elliott, the child of the film, as much as he's always the child-in-the-man heroes of his films; Richard Dreyfuss played Spielberg in both *Jaws* and *E3K*; the director doesn't quite agree. "Elliott's not me, but he's the closest thing to my experience in life, growing up in suburbia."

6. BREAKOUT

Unlike Woody Allen, say, Steven Spielberg is not one for psychoanalysis. He has no time for it; literally. *E.T.*, all the same, represents time spent on his own clock. It shows him coming out of the closet (or, in his case, the editing rooms) and showing off not so much his tricks but his heart. There have been chinks, revealed before. Now we see him for what he is. An unashamed romantic; nostalgic, not simply for old movies, but the old life – and how he dream-wished it had been.

1981 was the year of Spielberg's breakout – his catharsis. In a hectic, 29-week period, he made... well, produced and oversaw every shot of *Polyester* and then directed *E.T.* The first, he called his personal nightmare (built on childhood fears of clown dolls and trees' twiggly fingers rapping his window pane at night); the second, is his personal resurrection, a re-run of the period when his father left home, and young Steve began his maturity, moving from tormentor to protector of his family of womenfolk. Playing it again, Steve completed the maturation. Enter the new Spielberg: *E.T.* Tharch of all he surveys, his talent, his medium and his audience.

"When I started *E.T.* I was fat and happy and satisfied with having the films I have on my list. And I just didn't feel I had anything to lose. I actually had nothing to lose. I had nothing to prove to anybody except me – and any people who might have wondered if I ever had a heart beating beneath the one they assumed that ILM built for me."

Shooting this "whisper from my childhood... my suburban psychodrama" was such a breakthrough for the new Spielberg, it was the first time he'd directed without his usual security blanket of storyboarders. "I can't remember a time, except maybe when I was making little films in 16mm back in college, when I didn't draw everything out. I sketched about 40% of this movie on paper (Ed Verhaegh later storyboarded them; then they were discarded). I decided I was being pencilled into a corner. I decided, this once, to take a chance."

Using the script, he feels now, is the best storyboard. "Everything else would be the ideas I'd get from blocking the scene, looking at the set. I wasn't thinking five shots ahead. I always think five shots ahead! (Sometimes, five films...) On this picture, I couldn't be. I was thinking, to perhaps, only the next shot. It's been better for this movie which has so much emotion in it."

Not to mention kids and a paunchy, frog-who-is-a-prince of an *E.T.*, requiring close to a dozen operators to (hopefully) make it perform as required. Spielberg, therefore, had to fit in with the abilities of both, rather than have them obeying the strictures of his boards. The absence of such pre-ordained orders allowed certain improvisation from the cast and, more important, free range

options and spontaneity cathartic, experience then. There's nothing more boring for a director than to be tied down to what he's...sketched, drawn, painted, filmed in his head... months before stepping on the set. Hitchcock hated the sheer *ennui* of it. Spielberg, at 34, has finally discerned (hopefully like Coppola with electronicinema) that storyboard can be useful in small doses, for complicated action sequences, for example, not for an entire movie. Who among us, after all, writes down not merely a list of what we're about today, but in which precise order, what we'll say, how we'll move and react and the same for everyone we're programmed to meet?

7. THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT

"I love working with kids," says Spielberg. "Kids are more consistent and, I think, in many ways more spontaneous than adults. Their inexperience allows the honesty to come out—they can't censor, so they say what comes into their head first." Hi, penis-breath... "If I can get it on the first take, all these happy mistakes, then it's going to make the film a lot more spontaneous, as well. Physically, there were shorter hours. We can only use the kids in front of the camera four hours a day..." (Ironic words in the wake of the child-labour law charges facing the *Twilight Zone* makers and companies after the two Vietnamese children were killed by the crashing helicopter at 2:30 a.m.)

"But the magic they bring to movies. It's just incredible. If you give them their freedom, if you allow the kids to come up with their own inventions on how to do certain things..."

Finding children for films is no problem. Hollywood remains replete with as many mothers toting youngsters around hoping they've sired the new Shirley Temple or Mickey Rooney, Brooke Shields or Ricky Schroeder as there are home-made blondes lusting for a Monroe career. Spielberg and Kathy Kennedy saw about 300 kids in all for the handful in the film. "Not stage Hollywood actors, you know. I cast the film with real kids who've never been in a casting director's office or an art director's room. Many of them were remarkable but they weren't real. They thought before they felt."

Being allied to Universal solved the major problems of finding the all-important Elliott—the boy Spielberg wishes he had been. While video-auditioning went on, Sissy Spack was making *Raggydy Man*, her ex-art director husband Jack (*Carrie*) Fisk's directing debut. Sissy had two sons in the drama, the older of which was Henry Thomas from San Antonio Texas. It was his debut, too. Just as *Night Skies* was being transformed into *A Boy & a Girl* in the summer of 1980, Henry saw a local TV appeal for eight-year-olds with Texan accents, and made his mother take him along for an interview. He was among the last youngsters seen—and won the role. Spielberg could not have asked for a better audition. As the young son in *Raggydy Man* (a bad title for a finely etched little movie), Henry Thomas was (a) a kid without a daddy and (b) roaming around the back yard at night with a powerful torch entering an out-house—in search of the loo, not E.T. Before Fisk's film was edited, Spielberg has signed Henry Thomas. It was just a few weeks before shooting began. It was worth the wait. A star is born and all that.

Yet the youngster gave a dreadful reading at his meeting with Spielberg. "I could see he was petrified," noted Steve. "But when I asked him to improvise a scene with our casting director, he transformed immediately into Elliott. He can act and react. He's gifted and malleable. He gave an incredibly controlled performance"... and opposite, remember, a bunch of Carlo Rambaldi things.

"Well, he's a wonderful young actor— young person. I wish I could have been the kind of young man that Henry Thomas is in *E.T.*" (He might not have become the film-maker he is, if he had). "He's going to be a man at a much earlier age than I became one. He's a much better kid than I was... exactly what I wanted to be and never was."

With a rich stage background, Robert MacNaughton, 16, was selected as the elder brother of the troupe, Michael. He's been acting since age twelve, and won his film debut on the strength of his highly praised (and awarded) off-Broadway role of an idiot kid with water-divining powers in *The Diviners*. He was the first adolescent to have any leading role with New York's Circle Repertory Theatre company and stole the piece from such heavyweights as William Hurt, no less. Robert's television work includes Ray Bradbury's *Electric Grandmother* with the *Reds* Oscar-winner, Maureen Stapleton.

And for Gertie, the boys' impish kid sister ("an amalgamation," says Steve, "of my three terrifying sisters!"), Spielberg struck gold by choosing Drew Barrymore. She's the six-year-old daughter of John Barrymore, Jr. and actress Ildiko Jaid, which makes the imp the third generation of acting Barrymores—the grand-daughter of John Barrymore, the Great Profile of silent and early talkie movies. Spielberg chose her not for these antecedents but grabbing his attention from a hundred other hopefuls. She made up tales of being in a punk band for her video test. "She had the best stories of anyone. She's wonderfully funny and spontaneous. She just melted me. She's six going on 29." They're together a lot—building sandcastles on Malibu beach.

Coincidentally, Drew had acted with William Hurt, as well. She was one of his children in *Altered States*, her first film after having retired at 2½ after commercials and a tele-movie. "I wanna be a star," she says, "because it makes you feel good." That was rarely the case in the dynasty she belongs to—alcoholic grandfather, too much too soon auntie Diana; and an often drunk and bawling father, who quit acting as John Drew Barrymore in 1974 after an undistinguished career, going from the highs of *When the City Sleeps* (1956) to the depths of *The Christine Keeler Story* (1964). He's a poet now in long white hair and longer white beard, looking like Howard Hughes testing for Santa Claus. A very thin Santa Claus.

Working with children has crushed as many actors as directors, most of whom start babbling like W.C. Fields about the best kids being boiled. Spielberg, as Truffaut had noted, gets on fine with "keds" because, as he readily agrees, he's still a kid himself. "I've never given up the ghost of my childhood. I've been hanging on to that. I really feel I stopped developing emotionally when I was 13. I really believe we're all children! Because I'm an adult now, I can still relate to when I was Henry Thomas' age and that of all the young people in *E.T.* I can really ride the fence, ride herd on both feelings."

"You never talk down to kids! The minute you do that, you're not really aware of the cosmic changes this generation has made compared to, let's say, my generation or my parent's generation. It's like night and day. It's amazing! Kids are so much more worldly wise at ten than I ever was at 16. That's a pretty large jump."

"Start talking about motivation to a kid and he wants to cut right through it. He gets antsy, starts looking down at his feet, walking around in circles. He listens... but he's only listening to the salient things he thinks you want him to hear regarding the scenes. It's

much better to be direct and tell him exactly what you want, why you want it. I felt the best way to work with Henry was not to be his director but his buddy. It was easy because we both like Pac-Man."

Spielberg always saw Elliott as John Lennon's "Nowhere Man". Henry Thomas was more into video-games than Beatles music. "If I was out of touch with his reality, he'd give me a look that seemed to say 'Oh brother, he's old!' I could always tell when I was reaching Henry. He's smile and laugh... 'Yeah, yeah, right!' I was constantly being rewarded or corrected—by people three times less my age. I was moving faster than the kids. So, I slowed myself down and began to metabolize to them instead of Steven Spielberg."

8. MOTHER - SIR!

There are, really, only two adults in the film—despite a bunch of ten second doubles, led by the *Raiders*' stunt honcho Glen Randall. He was also entrusted with directing the second unit on *E.T.*, only the second time Steve has used a back-up unit. Another sign of the maturing breakout.

Spielberg chose Dee Wallace, a Joanne Woodward lookalike—acstaged—to be the kids' mother, carrying a brave face on being run out on by hubby never seeing *E.T.* under her feet for most of the film. Steve first noticed the one time ballerina from Kansas City on television... of course! TV is rarely off in his Coldwater Canyon house in Beverly Hills; he uses it, he says, like Valium on hitting the sack around 8.15 p.m. (He sleeps until noon). Steve caught blonde Dee in the short-lived *Skag* series with Karl Malden, when back from Tunisia in 1980. Plus, no doubt, though he's never mentioned it, in his new mate Joe Dante's *The Howling* (1981), in which she co-starred with her husband, Christopher Stone. She'd earlier opened most director's eyes with a winning cameo in *10/10* (1979). Dee was the blonde at Brian Dehoney's bar, who looked if she might just woo Dudley Moore away from his pursuit of Bo Derek.

For Peter Coyote, winning the fairly anonymous roles of Keys—the man with the keys, who Melissa Mathison calls the Captain Hook of this new-found *Peter Pan*—made up for losing the role of Indiana Jones. Coyote was one of the many who passed before Spielberg's video tests for *Raiders* when Tom Selleck couldn't dump *Magnum* and Harrison Ford hadn't become obvious. It wasn't, though, until noticing Peter in *Southern Comfort* (1981) that Spielberg called in the tall San Franciscan stage and mime star and ex-chairman of Gov Jerry Brown's California Arts Council. After *E.T.*, Peter Coyote joined the *Pottergeist* mother, JoBeth Williams in *Endangered Species*. Being nabbed by Steve does everyone's career a bit of good...

9. THE SHOOTING

Having overseen that everything there was to oversee was co-written, storyboarded and cast for *Pottergeist* during 57 days, mostly on MGM's Stage 12 in Culver City, the *wunderkid* took five weeks off before starting the shooting of *E.T.* on September 8, 1981. Five years after talking about his dream film to Truffaut... eleven months after Melissa Mathison started her first draft.

First shots were at a Culver City high school (which must be known as E.T. High, by now) for the scenes of Henry Thomas feeling sloshed as E.T. knocks off a couple of Coors beers at home; then kissing the prettiest gal in class when E.T. gloms John Wayne making hay with Maureen O'Hara in John Ford's *The Quiet Man* on the tube. (To my mind, this is

the first time Spielberg has shown any allegiance to the Fordian cult among the movie-brats).

The director has greater delight in having Henry feeling queasy during frog-dissection in Biology – a playback of Steve's own schooldaze. Cutting up frogs made him sick at school. Henry's freeing of frogs marked for the knife is just another of those things Spielberg wished he'd done as a kid.

Two days later, the unit moved to Northridge and Tujunga, still in Los Angeles, for eleven days of exteriors in Spielberg's beloved suburbia. "The anaesthetic of suburbia," he calls it. He's fierce in his defence of this affection, citing global urban statistics to prove the suburban population is larger than in the cities. It's where kids lead a

clearing for E.T.'s spaceship to come, take him home.

Bissell was a very late entry on the E.T. team, arriving months after the spaceship had been built from designs by the *Star Wars* series production artist Ralph McQuarrie; with additional input from the *E.T.* illustrator, Ed Verreaux. This left Bissell free to hunt for Elliott's home – a real one in Sunland – and then duplicate it on the stages. He found what Spielberg wanted. A house with a fantasy aspect to it. A stucco tract house, not unlike those being sold by eager-beaver Craig T. Nelson in *Pottergeist*. (Both homes are well nigh interchangeable and based, naturally, on Spielberg's old suburbia home in Phoenix. Chances are, if both films had been backed by the same company, he could have used the same sets). The tiled roofs and overall shape of the place accommodated the various perspectives the director was after. The mountains behind it were a plus. Better still, the house stood out from the rest on the street. "It looked so isolated," Bissell comments. "Removed and glorified, somehow." It is now.

Finally, the film wrapped its 61-day shoot with more exteriors at the small coastal town of Crescent City, closeby the California-Oregon border. The original schedule had been 64 days. Shooting from the hip in his new style, and utilising a second unit director for only the second time (after *Raiders*), Spielberg had pulled everything together under schedule – again for only the second time, as on *Raiders*. While post-production work continued at Industrial Light and Magic and John Williams composed his sixth successive Spielbergian score (his best yet, particularly in melding the individual Elliott and E.T. themes as this odd couple's personalities interact), Spielberg started editing *Pottergeist* and *E.T.* in tandem.

"That's when I went crazy...!" No one said catherthis would be painless.

10. OLD ACQUAINTANCE

For his most personal movie, Spielberg chose a cameraman new to Hollywood feature credits, though not to Spielbergia. Allen Daviau had been there at the start of it all. He was "the cinematographer who was as anxious as I was about getting into his line of work professionally," that shot Steve's *Amblin'* (1967) which proved his – their – ticket to a Universal pact.

Needing some kind of showcase for his talents – a 35mm portfolio movie, if nothing else, to simply strut his stuff with – Spielberg had run into millionaire and would-be producer Dennis Hoffman. He put 10,000 dollars on the table. Steve decided not to run the camera himself, this once, and called up Daviau. He'd seen some of his work. Yes, on the tube of course! Allen used to shoot weekly three-minute pieces for the L.A. rock tele-show, *Boss City*. Another friend, Chuck Silver, offered to take the 25-minute *Amblin'* under the studios. Sidney Sheinberg, then head of Universal – M.C.A. Television, now president of M.C.A. itself, saw it and offered the pair of them contracts. Spielberg jumped at the offer... and hello, Joan Crawford, Marcus Welby, etc. Daviau stuck to freelancing in documentaries and commercials – too young, apparently, to become a fully fledged member of the Cinematographers' Union. (Spielberg had no trouble with the Directors Guild although he was only 21). As Sam Goldwyn was prone to say, we've all passed a lot of water since then. Spielberg moved up into such cinematographic stratas as Vilmos Zsigmond, Bill Butler, Billy Fraker and Doug Slocombe. He rediscovered Daviau – on tv, again! – lensing the *Boy Who Drank Too*

Much tele-movie in 1981. The old collaborators found they still talked the same language, voiced the same challenges. "How much can we stretch what a piece of film can handle in contrasts of light to dark...?" That clinched Allen Daviau's movie debut. Not a bad way to start!

"We decided," recounts Daviau, "that E.T. had to have such a feeling of reality to it that you could accept that this fantastic thing is happening. Inside the house, all illumination had to be justified by realistic light sources – a lamp, window, daylight. You only get into fantasy when dealing with the rocket ship and other things extra-terrestrial... But you have to believe the house, the neighbourhood, everything else as being realistically photographed."

Allen Daviau, clearly, is a find. He's a veritable John Williams of the camera, lighting his scenes, as *Newsweek's* critic pointed out, like symphonic motifs. He gives characters their own photographic themes. Back-lighting for Elliott and his stubby pal, natural lighting for the rest of the family brood – the full works for Keys and Co. Daviau even survives (by adroitness using) Spielberg's familiar full-blast light-show exclamation marks along the drama. "To me," Spielberg says of this, his major trade-mark, "light is a magnet – it can veil something wondrous or, as in the flashlights on *E.T.*, something terrifying." Pause "The first scary thing I learned to do as a child was turn off the light!"

The camerall also understood – and appreciated – Spielberg's animation influences, admitted to as far back as his feature debut, *The Sugarland Express* (1974). Another trademark of a Spielberg film is some favourite old cartoon on TV, just as much as the tv, itself. And so at the very start of *E.T.* the *Bambi*-esque forest (Melissa's idea, more magical she said than Steve's plan to have the space visitors landing in a vacant lot), Spielberg and Daiu show the mystery men rushing around searching for E.T.'s ship. They're seen as torches and legs only.

"It was very important to me that adults not be part of this children's world – visibly," explains Spielberg. "That they have no identity until it's crucial to the story. I remember the cartoons of Warner Brothers and MGM – of Chuck Jones, of Friz Freleng, Tex Avery, of all the great cartoonists in the '40s. Often they'd choose small characters – mainly dogs and cats. But you'd never see the adults. You'd only see their legs. You'd see the lady coming in and grabbing the cat or dog by the nape of its neck and hitting it with the newspaper. You saw the hands. You saw the stockings. You saw the high-heeled shoes. You saw the tight-fitting dress. You never saw the character! And I remember that for an adult to violate a cartoon world was a terrible mistake. And I drew a parallel with that."

"I wanted to assume the more important child's point of view, here. *Close Encounters* is told from strictly an adults' point of view. I really wanted this movie to be about a world, a universe of children. I wanted to become a child to make E.T. – not an adult speaking to children through adults. And I am a child!"

11. LET'S TALK ABOUT WOMEN

When Spielberg took his *CE3K* team on stage for media conference in 1977, the nine-strong group included three women – two actresses and co-producer Julia Phillips. At Cannes, the *E.T.* team was four – half of them women. Indeed, at times, it seems as if the rest of his crew were all women. Kathy Kennedy as co-producer; Carol Littleton editing. Deborah Scott adding humour style in her costumes. ►



sheltered upbringing, to create their own worlds and secrets. "What better place to keep a creature from outer space from the grown-ups?" he laughs.

"I don't believe the same movie with the same children at the age would take place in, let's say, Detroit or Philadelphia... I'm not saying that being sheltered is a good thing, that it's good for kids who live in the outskirts not really to get a sense of what it's like to be a person in a real world of movement and energy – and, in many ways, of hostility. These kids haven't grown up yet and hopefully E.T. will be their *Peter Pan* and they'll be in a responsible Never-Neverland and never have really to grow up, you know, grow hard. Grow... old!"

Next stop, into the studio, not Universal's expensive spread at Universal City (despite the logo on the movie and I suppose, E.T. on the grand rubbernecking Universal Tour any day now, alongside Bruce the shark) but over at the Laird International set-up on Culver City's West Washington Boulevard. A stone's – or table's – throw away from *Pottergeist's* home at MGM. I bet the overheads are lower, though; one reason why *Pottergeist* cost 11 million dollars at Metro, compared to *E.T.'s* 10.3 million. Laird was the lair for most of the work with E.T. himself. A controlled studio environment was vital for the various models, his dozen operators and (ssh!) one midget double.

For this 42 day studio schedule, debuting production designer Jim Bissell built Elliott's home on two soundstages – the upstairs bedrooms of Mum and the kids on one, and a full-sized ground floor, complete with back yard and hillside background, on the other. A third stage was taken over by the redwood







Two of the casting directors were women. So was Steve's first assistant director, Katy Emide, and his personal assistant, the set decorator, production co-ordinator, script supervisor, publicist Lyla Foggia, the extras' caster, accountant, set-dresser, hairstylist, first aid nurse, the kid's teacher on the set, first assistant editor, one of the negative cutters, one of ILM's production co-ordinators, two animators, two model-makers, four of E.T.'s operators, the designer of E.T.'s eyes, its movement co-ordinator and oh, most of the team responsible for E.T.'s special movements!

"I like women," is Spielberg's immediate and somewhat redundant observation. "I claim no profound understanding of women, but I've an agreeable faith in them. I was raised in a world of women – growing up in a house with three screaming younger sisters and a mother who played concert piano with seven other women. And I like working with women. I work better with them. *E.T.* had plethora of them. I'm less guarded about my feelings around women. I call it the shoulder-pad syndrome. You can't cry on a shoulder that's wearing a shoulder-pad."

Presumably that's something he learned when directing Joan Crawford...

And for a woman's eye view of Spielberg, over to Melissa Mathison. "None of us is afraid to tell Steven when he's wrong. He's as softy as big a sap as anyone. But he rarely lets that show in his movies."

Or not until now.

12. MASTER OF THE WORLD

"When I didn't want to face the real world, I just stuck a camera up to my face. And it worked! Now, I'm trying to make movies by shooting more from the hip and using my eyes to see the real world."

That world became all too tragically real with the three deaths during the making of the first episodes of his next movie: *Steven Spielberg Presents The Twilight Zone*. When he first mentioned this project at Cannes, it was going to be a lark. Knocking off a 22-minute tale among the others planned for mates, old and new: John Landis, Joe Dante and Australian George Miller. At time of going to press, Spielberg hadn't begun his segment in the now reactivated schedule. He

has to move fast — and forego the editing, another break from old habits — as his next assignment is *Raiders II* or *Indy II* which Paramount, rather than Lucasfilm, has revealed will be called *Raiders of the Forbidden City*. Harrison Ford (and ILM) star again in a scenario from old Lucas hands Willard Huyck and Gloria Katz — "the grown-up kids who did *American Graffiti* (1973)".

Locations, rumoured for Africa and India, will definitely include lensing in mainland China. Sound a good place to be, what with all the mounting lawsuits against Spielberg in L.A. courts regarding, in the main, alleged copyright infringement of most of his last four film scripts.

After *Raiders* Spielberg has a variety of

plans including a musical, already in preparation with jazz and film composer Quincy Jones (and not John Williams as might be expected), and a remake of Spencer Tracy's 1943 movie, *A Guy name Joe* — trailed with a clip on the *Poltergeist* tube. Then comes what Kathy Kennedy calls his grown-up love story. "Ah," laughs Spielberg, "but in my kinda love story, they'd laugh themselves to orgasm."

And then, *E.T. II*...? "*Peut-etre*," he said in Cannes.

There's no perhaps about it. The originally is so enormously successful, a sequel is absolutely A1-priority definite as far as Universal is concerned. As he admitted some years ago, Spielberg is only interested in the



sequels he wants to make. He's already been musing over several ideas with Melissa Mathison — and no doubt his co-sandcastle builders — for the return of the most lovable it from outer space. In Truffaut fashion (with his alter-ego actor, Jean-Pierre L  aud), Steve could make good use of his out-cuts from the first film, compare with an older Henry Thomas in a few years' time. One sequence, he regrets having sliced had E.T. splashing about in the bath with Elliot. That's bound to be in any sequel flashback.

"He has an idea every 13 seconds," reports his other producer partner, Frank Marshall, 35, the Mr. Nice Guy previously allied with Bogdanovich, Scorsese, Walter Hill (ah, that's how Steve saw *Southern Comfort*) and even Orson Welles on *The Other Side of the Wind* (1979; a semi-autobiographical Wellesian experience, never released due to immense complications in its Swiss and pre-Kohmen Iranian funding).

"I have to figure out how serious these ideas are," says Marshall. "If he wants to do something, I figure out how to make it possible, financially. Steven doesn't think in monetary terms."

His ideas cover the entertainment waterfront. From movies, personal and fantastic, for himself or U.S.C. and J.C.L.A. film school graduates to start with, to video games based on his mega-movies. He calls his *Polygeist* game, "Get Carol Anne Out of The Closet"; so, now he's making money out of films and games based on what he used to do to his sisters in Phoenix. Then, there's Steve's toys. Like the *E.T.* alarm clock, which has the clock face in its stomach. (Didn't Felix Silla's Twixi have one around his middle, too?) "The clock will glow red at night," says the inventor. "When the alarm goes off, his head pops out and makes E.T. sounds." Go school...?

No wonder John Milius is worried that Steve may copy George Lucas and give up directing... and become president of Atari. Milius needn't fret. His longtime pal feels he has long term film ideas to keep him going until he's 50. These apparently include his wish to make one of the *Star Wars* series and there have been rumours of a Spielbergian 3-D spectacular. But then there are lots of rumours about his ethnarthic future, lord of all he surveys in Hollywood.

There is, for example, the eternal suggest that he — or George or Coppola — will wind up running his own studio production line before the end of the '80s. "Somebody's gonna have to give me, maybe, 150-million dollars and they'll either never see that money again, or they'll multiply it by a factor of a hundred, maybe a thousand."

No one has found the nerve for such a gamble yet. With, perhaps, good cause. Spielberg may be the director of three of the top five films in history — and inside seven years — but apart from *Polygeist*, the productions he's set up for other directors have not made any immense impact on the film world. He's never even sure how his own movies will perform. "And that's on record!" he underlines. "I've never gone around saying 'This film is gonna do better than that film.' I made *E.T.* for example, for us... I never thought how it would be accepted or how it would do in the theatres. The person who somehow knows what a movie will make is George Lucas. He said that *Raiders* would be the film of the summer in 1981. I said, 'How do you know?' He said, 'Trust me'.

"I think if you put everybody together and rated them, Marty Scorsese would have to be the best film-maker of our generation.

George Lucas is the best movie-maker." He's also the best businessman, turning his back on Hollywood, *perse*, and getting on with the

job in his own ILM backyard. But the real difference between the rival film factions, according to Spielberg, is the difference he's always on about — between urbanites and suburbanites. He cited Coppola and Scorsese as townie directors and, like the European film-makers, they internalise their work and take it very seriously. Lucas and Spielberg, on the other hand — The Suburban Kids — simply have fun with their movies and think of their audiences first.

"Right now, we've all got our own universes to make movies in," he told *Rolling Stone*. "Francis lives in a world of his own. George lives in a galaxy far, far away — but close to human audiences. And I'm an independent movie-maker working within the Hollywood establishment. But all of us share one thing: each of us would like to do to the film industry what Irving Thalberg (MGM's legendary producer of the '30s) did it fifty years ago." And that, in a nutshell, is to make better films. Artistic, as well as commercial.

Whether he runs his own assembly line, or freelances for his mates and major studios (and they should note that from *E.T.* onward, he's going to own copyright and negative of all his films — or no deal), Steven Spielberg obviously believes the Coppola line that his generation is due to inherit Hollywood. After all, Steve points out, he doesn't know any more than four executives in Film City who know how to cut or make a movie.

The directors who do include two teams he helped bring into features: The Two Bobs, Roberts Zemeckis and Gale; and, Hal Barwood and Matthew Robbins. Also on the list he cited for *Rolling Stone*: Robert Towne, John Carpenter, Hugh Hudson, Ridley Scott and, inevitably, Brian De Palma, John Milius. "I like this guy Michael Mann," he added, "and Alan Parker".

They've all a long way to go to catch Spielberg; much less the "new" Steve. At times, though, he's not sure if he's developed enough. Not as far as Harrison Ford for instance... Spielberg banned all interviews at Cannes. He turned up, all the same, in a hotel room to face the cameras of German director Wim Wenders. A survivor of the Coppola experience with *Hammnett*, Wenders had arranged a crew of six, one 16mm camera and a Nagara recorder in the room. The equipment was turned on and everyone left the chosen Cannes celebrity to make with his answer to the query about the future of the movie business. Steve was quite proud of his response, analytical, all "very Wall Street Journal," until Harrison snorted. "I'd have taken my clothes off and sat there nude until the film ran out!"

Spielberg thinks Ford had the right idea. But Steve's performance wasn't that bad. It sums up the ethnarthic attitude to films in general and *E.T.* ("this movie I'm happy with") in particular. Film City execs should not talk... or at least listen.

"A big screen, sound and sitting in the company of a thousand strangers is to me, the most seductive thing in the world. There's nothing quite like it. The laughter and applause — you can't get that lying in bed, watching a movie on television. And I really believe that the audience knows that as well as the film-maker. You can only stay home so much of the time before you've gotta get out. Get some air. Get in your car. Park in a parking-lot and go to a movie, buy a box of popcorn or a bunch of Kleenex or whatever you need and sit down for two hours and be taken away. Because, environmentally, that's what movies are all about. It's light and shadow but it's creating another world, another universe... in a very dark enclosure." ●



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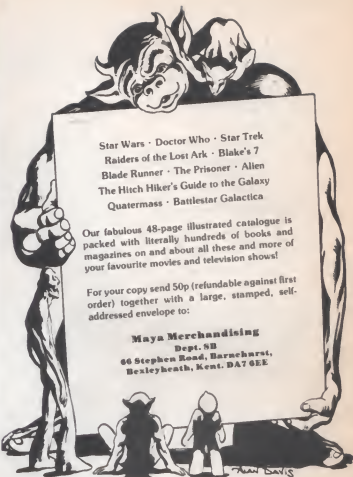
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J. G. Ballard is probably one of our finest living writers and is still underrated by the reading public at large. The uniqueness of his vision and the special elegance of his writing has given rise to a body of work quite unlike that of any other writer. Ballard is fascinated by the impact of modern technologies and lifestyles on the human psyche, exploring what he himself has aptly described as inner space. His early work was strikingly original and he perhaps reached the height of his powers in the mid-seventies with novels such as *Crash* and *High-Rise*, which are horrifically clinical portraits of peculiarly modern madnesses. The novels which have followed since then have been somewhat less unnervingly mesmerizing.



His latest collection, *Myths of the Near Future*, is now out from Cape at £6.95. The title strikes me as a pretty neat description of Ballard's work in general; no matter how modern or futuristic the setting, his stories always possess a certain mythical quality with their images of doomed astronauts who seem like demi-gods, abandoned landscapes with their epic-like qualities and women who often resemble Sirens, inexorably drawing the protagonists to some act of apotheosis or destruction. But the danger with any obsessional use of certain kinds of motifs is that the writer may begin retreading ground effectively covered in earlier work. This seems to me to be the problem with the present compilation, which I found somewhat disappointing. It's a pretty varied collection, and the reader encountering Ballard for the first time might well be impressed by its achievements. But for others familiar with Ballard's work, there's little new on offer here. The two longest stories take us again to derelict landscapes inhabited by ex-astronauts; they seem almost versions of one another, and neither is as powerful as earlier versions. The shorter stories are generally more effective, some containing the droll, laconic humour which also characterizes Ballard's work. But I was persistently nagged by the feeling that Ballard is no longer stretching himself and is content to remix familiar ingredients from his earlier work. Because of his distinctive style, he has often been parodied by other writers (though rarely effectively); in this collection he is veering dangerously close to self-parody.

M. John Harrison is another British writer who has carved out his own particular niche in fantasy literature. His latest novel, *In*

Viriconium (Gollancz, £6.95) takes us back to the same world of his earlier novels. *The Pastel City* and *A Storm of Wings*, though there's little connection between them apart from the basic setting. In this novel, a debilitating plague has infected part of the city and Ashlyme, an artist, enters the plague zone in an effort to save another artist, Audsley King. Harrison writes with care and is always capable of the evocative passage; but this story, with its oblique literary and artistic references, ultimately seemed too stilted and knowing; the heavy weight of its symbolism finally stifles the life out of it.

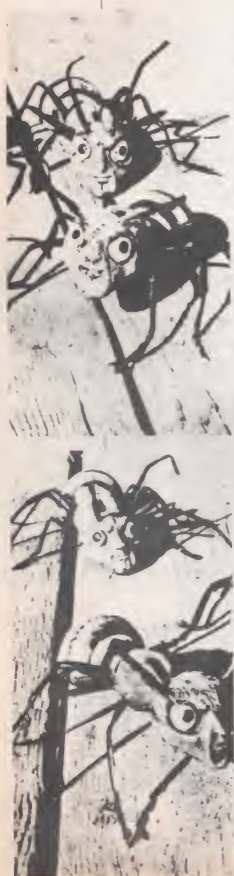
Also from Gollancz is *The Eye of the Heron* by Ursula Le Guin (£6.95), a short novel which first appeared in an anthology of stories by different writers in 1978. It's set on the planet Victoria, where the human settlers have been long-established but still huddle on one corner of the planet and are split into two factions. The people of the shanty town want to establish a new settlement in the hinterland, but the ruling elite of the city resist this. The ensuing confrontation leads to a tragic death but ultimate victory for the townsfolk. The novel deals with one of Le Guin's favourite preoccupations, that of the balance between the freedom of the individual and the demands of society as a whole. Though not as ambitious as he longer work, it's written with all the warmth and stylishness one would expect of her.

As I write this Steven Spielberg's *E.T.* has not yet gone on general release in the U.K., though judging by all the talk of illicit videos in circulation I may be one of the few people in the country who *hasn't* seen it. Meanwhile Sphere have published the novelization of the screenplay by William Kotzwinkle at £1.50. I'm going to approach the film with an open mind, but I was determined not to like the book. There are good reasons for this. Novelizations tend to be hasty affairs, dashed off without real care; the novelizer is usually working from someone else's script, to a set fee, and his chief concern is to flesh out the bare bones of the screenplay with a minimum of fuss and effort. I speak from personal experience. Too often the result is a nuts-and-bolts book which lacks colour, visual detail and real imaginative life.

Well, good news. The novelization of *E.T.* is much better than most of its ilk. For once the film people have chosen a writer with an established reputation rather than the usual hack. William Kotzwinkle is the author of *Doctor Rat* and other well-received novels, and he provides us with an individual interpretation of Melissa Mathison's screenplay that captures much of the characterization and humour which I suspect are the chief strengths of the film. In strictly thematic terms the book (and doubtless the film) begs a lot of questions and tends to address itself to the intelligent adolescent rather than the adult in us. The same could be said about Spielberg's work in general. But overall it's an undeniably lively and entertaining adaptation. Don't think; relax and enjoy it.

Finally a brief mention for *Lenark* by Alasdair Gray (Granada, £2.95) Subtitled "A Life in Four Books", this is a long novel with considerable fantasy elements which recounts the story of Lenark and his alter-ego Duncan Thaw in the twin cities of Glasgow and Unthank. It's a dense, complex and very individual book which possesses considerable imaginative power.





One trend that tv has ignored for some time now, is the man vs monster story. With the possible exception of *Doctor Who* which constantly pits our hero against all manner of inhuman creations, there has been nothing to excite the monster buff, and yet in the past the small screen has had its fair share of dinosaurs, mutants and aliens. One such example was an early ATV series produced in 1960 and entitled *Pathfinders to Venus*. As a matter of fact this particular title was the third in a trilogy, the first two being *Pathfinders to the Moon* and *Pathfinders to Mars*, which featured giant slimy worms. On Venus however the life forms had evolved a little further than creepy crawlies. For this time our intrepid band of space explorers, led by Gerald Flood, encountered dinosaurs and tropical jungles. The jungles appeared thanks to some rather impressive looking miniatures and studio interiors, the dinosaurs, thanks to stock footage from the films of Karel Zeman. Because of Zeman's fabulous stop motion of stegosaurs, tyrannosaurs and pterodactyl, the producers of *Pathfinders to Venus* had more than enough film to pad out the series. Zeman's work was even the subject of a special effects programme in the early BBC series *TomTom*, a magazine for children featuring a large robot dog called *Serendipity*.

Another series, this time with a more adult audience in mind, was the BBC production *The Monsters* which culminated in some excellent prehistoric denizens rising from Loch Ness to terrify the local populace. The mysterious Scottish sea serpent was even the subject of an early episode of *The Saint* starring Roger Moore. When a number of people are discovered beaten to death on the shores of Loch Ness, Simon Templar decides to investigate. Next to each of the bludgeoned bodies he discovers giant footprints, three-toed footprints. Although he unmasks the human villain responsible for faking the deaths there is still a final twist to the story involving the real monster. In the episode *The House on Dragon's Rock*, scientists Anthony Bate and Mervyn Johns are tampering with the forces of nature and unleash a giant ant on the occupants of a Welsh mountain. Trapped in the creature's lair, Simon Templar needs to be as resourceful as ever to defeat the monster. The story was written by Harry Junkin and the episode was directed by Moore himself.

Of the mutant variety, writers Kit Pedler and Gerry Davis came up with an excellent series entitled *Doomwatch*, from which emerged a rather silly feature film. The tv stories however were packed with plenty of nasty viruses, killer rats, nerve gases, and the harmful hazards of supersonic booms. Before he died Kit Pedler said of his series "I very strongly believe that there should be some sort of real life equivalent to *Doomwatch*. Not acting for the Government, but investigating on behalf of the people. I believe it to be a feasible proposition." Sometimes the monsters in *Doomwatch* were the people themselves.

Back in the early seventies writer Nigel Kneale gave us the tv series *Beasts*. Although

the creatures of the title were more the cerebral kind, Kneale still managed to incorporate in to each story a menace of flesh and blood. In the episode *During Bart's Party*, a houseful of people hide in fear of masses of death dealing rats, that scamper about beneath the floorboards like domestic tube trains following the human scent. In the story *The Dummy*, an actor in a monster suit starts to act out his part for real and only makes us thankful that we never worked on the sets of the Toho *Godzilla* movies.

"There's a certain creepy element in all the plays," reported Kneale at the time. "But the creepiness works out in different ways. The horror elements aren't always on display although one of the plays has more brilliant special effects than any I've ever written." Other episodes included *Special Offer*, a story about an invisible rodent in a supermarket and *What Big Eyes* starring Hungarian timber wolves and a scientist with a weird theory regarding the legend of Little Red Riding Hood.

Perhaps the tv series with the most monsters was *The Outer Limits*. Although the show didn't look quite as good when it was repeated recently, for the first time in twenty years, it certainly had its moments. Amongst the most outstanding episodes featuring monsters were *The Zanti Misfits*, *The Invisibles*, *Nightmare*, and *Keeper of the Purple Twilight*. The Zanti Misfits were insect villains from another galaxy, The Invisibles were parasites thirsting for human intellects, *Nightmare* told of the American soldiers being imprisoned by bulbous headed aliens, and *Keeper of the Purple Twilight* related the tale of a mass invasion of our planet by superior creatures.

Another tv show in a similar vein was Rod Serling's *Night Gallery*. Although it wasn't in any way superior to *The Outer Limits*, it was at times infinitely more enjoyable. Amongst the most outstanding episodes to suit the monster buff were *Pickman's Model* from the story by H.P. Lovecraft and *There Aren't Any More MacBanes* by Alvin Sapinsky. One told of grotesque creatures living in the sewers below Paris and the other warns what might happen if a demon from hell returns to claim a soul. Both were brilliant examples of Serling's expertise in bringing the monster story to the screen. A future *TV Zone* will give a complete episode guide to *Night Gallery*, and if possible Serling's *The Twilight Zone*, which is at present the subject of a new feature film from Warner Brothers.

Finally returning to the subject of dinosaurs, the BBC will be showing a film in the New Year about the multi-million dollar complex EPCOT (Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow), which opened recently at Walt Disney World in Florida. A theme park on a huge scale, one of its many highlights is a ride through a gigantic prehistoric diorama complete with all manner of three-dimensional creatures. Brontosaurus, Tyrannosaurus and Pterodactyls. Those who heard Brian Sibley's excellent coverage of the event in last October's *Kaleidoscope* programme will be in no doubt as to its appeal to monster buffs. ●

The first BBC *Space Age* album I compiled—*BBC Space Themes*—was reviewed by someone else for *Starburst*. I hadn't started this irregular jaunt down musical memory lanes. However, the second compilation has recently appeared and even if it isn't ethical to review one's own record—here goes anyway. Actually all I did was to have the initial concept, suggest some of the tracks and write the sleeve notes. The problem of finding the actual piece of music, locating the recordings and assemble the order was in the hands of BBC records resident, William Grierson. It's not as easy as it sounds. One might think all you have to do is run a few tracks together and that's it. However, it's very easy for, say me, to suggest so and so theme, but it may not a) be recorded, or b) available for a compilation, or c) both. *Star Trek* is the classic example here. The first *Space Themes* album used one cover version by Johnny Keating and I remember at the time, writing a letter to *Starburst* explaining this point. So William has the laborious task of taking my suggestion, edging his own and then discovering whether in fact the recording can be used. This new record isn't completely new, for some tracks are repeated from the first, consequently it comes out as *Space Invaded—BBC Space Themes*, but really it's *Space Themes Vol 2*.

Meanwhile I was scratching my head over what to write about. Vol 1 had been fairly straight forward and the sleeve notes took on an air of factuality. Vol II though I felt needed something different and I ended up inventing a character called Captain Zuup who ended up taking over the album back completely. (Unbeknown to me at the time the Beeb were making a children's programme called *Captain Zep*, that my colleague Jim Francis was working on, all of which must prove something).

My Captain Zuup developed into a complete story involving various elements of the programmes that would later be represented by the music. I showed the original draft to William, who—thankfully—liked it, but said it was far too long. Zuup consequently got drastically edited but still retained 1/2 the space on the cover.

Enough of this though—what's on the record itself? Well, *Dr. Who's* there of course, but you do get the new version by Peter Howell (of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop). What you also get for the first time is some incidental music from *Dr. Who*. This story is *The Leisure Hive*, and William found a section of the music—by Peter again—which makes a very effective track in its own right. There is the new version of the *Tomorrow's World* theme—changed after many many years of the John Dankworth theme to a newer piece by Richard Denton and Martin Cook, (they were the ones that masqueraded under the name of Nostromo and did the jazzed up version of the *Alien* and *The Black Hole* themes). *Blake's 7* is represented, but this theme is the same. The fourth series was actually slightly different in its arrangement and there was a disco version, but this recording is the one used in Series 1 to 3. Patrick Moore's long running *The Sky at Night*, now in it's 26th year uses the familiar Sibelius piece 'At the Castle' from Pellias and Melisand. *Cosmos* is represented by the Vangelis piece used as a theme, 'Heaven and Hell', and another piece 'Alpha', used throughout the series. Both were originally

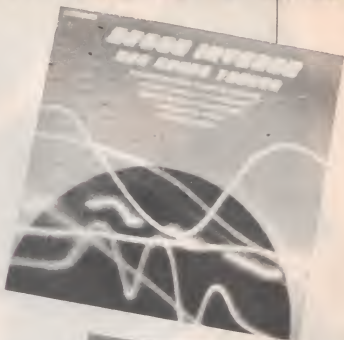
available back to back on a BBC single.


K-9—who branched out on his own briefly last year has his own theme from K-9 and company, written by Fiachra Trench and Ian Levine, featuring the uncredited voice of John Leeson (probably to John's relief!).

Star Trek is represented this time round by a different cover version by Charles Caleo. There is also a different version of Aaron Copeland's 'Fanfare for the Common Man'. Not Emerson, Lake & Palmer but the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, conducted by J.R., sorry Donald Johanos (bang goes the rumours that Dallas is all Ewing's—or perhaps it is—) This piece accompanied the Space Shuttle Launches, whereas on the previous record it was used for Apollo Soyuz Test Project in 1975. Completely new to the record is the Malcolm Clarke (also Radiophonic Workshop) music for the Nigel Calder spoof 'The Comet is Coming'.

Last but not least, comes that motley band of beings who hitched their way around the Galaxy. This is the original Tim Souster version of the Eagle's *Journey of the Sorcerer*.

And it's all in mind-boggling Stereo.....





Courage/Roddenberry theme, though by the time the fanfare's finished, he's off onto his own music.

If *Star Trek* follows a continuing theme, *Tron* definitely 'goes where no man has gone before' and whether you like the film or not, you can't deny it's different. The producers obviously decided on a different approach with regard to the soundtrack as well, and turned to synthesizer expert Wendy Carlos. Carlos' expertise with this form of keyboard instrument, particularly the Moog was, they must have decided, just the thing for explaining the inner electronic world of the computer game. Carlos had in fact worked on two films previously, both for Stanley Kubrick. First was *A Clockwork Orange* when, (then Walter) Carlos had provided most the score – adapting it in the main, from established classics, ranging from Beethoven's 9th to Rossini's *The Thieving Magpie*.

Years later came *The Shining*, for which Wendy Carlos wrote the theme and one other peice. With *Tron* though, she has the whole score to deal with, and although they are not used exclusively, two orchestras – The London Philharmonic Orchestra, used on the record, and as far as the film was concerned the Los Angeles Orchestra, though whether this was actually the Los Angeles Philharmonic isn't clear. There are a lot of short tracks on this record, more like old style soundtrack albums, but each – even the short 'Creation of Tron' that opens the album, stand up on their own. The mixing of the typical Carlos electronic treatment with the standard orchestra sound works very well and the album as a whole blends well together. Two tracks by the group Journey are also individual, performing 1990's theme and Only Solutions.

Last but not least comes the film which has done for aliens what Mary Poppins did for sugar sales. And if Steven Spielberg has done it again with *ET* – the film, John Williams has done it again with *ET* – the music and it's probably the best to date.

In general it's a lot more concise than earlier *Jaws/Star Wars/Empire/Superman/Raider* soundtracks and owes most of it's origins – most appropriately – to *Close Encounter*. Unlike *Tron*'s a dozen tracks a side, *ET* consists of a much smaller number and they blend so well together that it plays a continuous piece of music, well each side does anyway! There is no London Symphony Orchestra though. Being an entirely Stateside film, presumably the use of a British orchestra was deemed to be excessive. Los Angeles does boast of it's own orchestra – the L.A. Philharmonic, who have done film scores before, and Williams of course, is principle conductor of the Boston Pops Orchestra, but neither of these were used and instead the soundtrack is played by an un-credited session orchestra. However this apart, the soundtrack to *ET* is one of the best of John Williams' compositions and highly recommended.

SPACE INVADED – BBC Space Themes BBC RECORDS REH 442

STAR TREK II – THE WRATH OF KHAN – James Horner WEA Records Atlantic 50905

TRON – Wendy Carlos CBS Records 70223

ET – The Extra Terrestrial – John Williams MCA MCF 3160

The last few months have seen the release of four major S.F. films, all with important musical soundtracks. However, there are only 3 soundtrack albums and the one that's missing is *Blade Runner*. With music by Vangelis one would have thought it would have made a desirable album – especially as the end of the film credits state this fact. But as Polydor reports apparently Vangelis Papathanassiou decided that he didn't wish a recording to be released, which is the artist's prerogative, so no album.

There are soundtrack albums though for the other three. In order, first came *Star Trek II – The Wrath of Khan*, which thankfully had as much in common with the first film as Darth Vader has to Yoda. In fact the best bit about the first film was the Jerry Goldsmith soundtrack and it was somewhat of a surprise to see he hadn't written the music for the second. Instead it's by James Horner, but it's very much in the mould of the Goldsmith score and like the earlier makes for enjoyable listening in it's own right. In fact Horner uses snatches of the Goldsmith score in places and what is especially effective, themes from the original TV series. The opening starts with the

ROMERO/MRS KING (ensemble): *King Kong vs The Eff Word!*
Ssh! Or he'll do it... Paul Morrissey and I were agreeing the other day that "bad language" works in his films because his cast are unknowns: works fine with the young set, too. De Niro, Pacino, Keitel, even Nicholson—but never rings true with the oldies, Kirk Douglas, Burt Lancaster. And yet, your final Pratt, E.G. Marshall, who's 72, was perfectly at home with it. He was such a mean, Scrooge sonuvabitch, it fitted Pratt like an epithetical glove.

KING: He never even hesitated. He was right there! **ROMERO:** He wanted to do it... after those National Geographic specials on tv.

KING: He has the most difficult lines, you know. Lines, words, that'd you'd expect to read in a novel rather than hear out of an actor's mouth.

ROMERO: And he's there by himself with a lotta dialogue.

KING: This is, he carries every word of it off.

ROMERO: Yeah, he does.

KING: He's more believable making those words sound right than other people, lesser actors would be in parts that are written more naturalistically. God, I was impressed! To watch him work, too. The way he would just *Krrack!*—turn it on.

7. FILM STAR KING

How do you feel sitting there and watching yourself, Steve?

KING: Just real weird. Real sc... (he sounds as if he's going to say: scared; and changes his mind) amazed!

ROMERO: (Huge laugh).

KING: I don't know, man.

ROMERO: You shouldn't be at all, Stephen.

KING: Oh I am. I am! I feel so strange... I can understand why Lee Remick says she's never watched herself.

Many stars say that, and it must be bizarre because you're so hugely larger than life. And it's not the face you see in your shaving mirror, is it?

KING: Absolutely not. I hope not! Man, that's greeeeen!

ROMERO: I think what he did with it, though, was just exactly right. It's exactly what it needed to be.

How much debate went on before you two decided that Steve should play Jordy Verrill?

ROMERO: Not a lot, really. I wanted Steve to do it from the jump and he said, "Well let me think about it." I just wanted to cover him in moss. Make him itch!

KING: I always say that since I played such a total scuzzo in *Knightriders*, George decided there was an endless capacity for vapidity and stupidity there that he asked me to do it. I said Yes because it's very hard to say No to George when he wants to do something.



8. COMICBOOK EFFECTS

Your comic strip saturation lighting effects are great. You worked long and hard on those. I hear. Two colours on a face, and all those backgrounds, jagged lines, spirals, lighting stabs, all on... well, not backdrops... animation, I suppose.

ROMERO: Those were backdrops, those effects were on the set, actually. Really?

ROMERO: Yeah, all of them. I said, I'm not gonna wait to see these until a week before we open? So Cletus Anderson designed these screens. They're, basically, just scrims with opaque patterns.

Somebody's been going to the theatre...

ROMERO: Yeah, exactly. It's a stage technique. We could put a wash of light on the front of the scrim and bring coloured lights through from behind and get our patterns. We did all those right on the set. Much easier than trying to do them optically. We could see the results straight away. You can see whether or not it works—and you have the film! You don't have to have a piece of leader in there, taking the place of the unfinished opticals. I had enough pieces of leader as it was. A shot—leader—shot—leader—shot—leader! It was difficult to get a sense if the film was playing because all the opticals we needed were in a lab someplace. And the matte paintings. All of that. You know, I've never shot anything that wasn't there before! (Laugh).



How did the actors cope—their heads were clamped firmly in place like in the Victorian photographic studios?

ROMERO: No, the screens were big. They had to be on marks and they had to stay in place. But it was much easier to do it that way. They all had fun doing that.

KING: It was like posing for stills.

ROMERO: Steve had one of those scrims. There were like about 14 dimmers on your shot, because the light had to change so much on your shot.

KING: That was like the last thing we did—and I was wild to get out and go home! But some of the dimmers weren't working very well... My son had one too. (Nine-year old Joe King plays the comicbook "crap" fan in the pro- and epilogue) He was on a stool because he's a little guy. I can't remember what was in his background. A spiral? No, it was E.G. (Marshall) that had a spiral. With Joe, it was lightning. I think everybody did one of those things—and in three or four takes. I don't know about Adrienne. I wasn't there when she did hers.

ROMERO: That's all it was, three or four takes.

KING: It worked pretty well. I thought they looked great.

As per your grand design. You may not have thought, first of all about backdrops, but you wanted this kind of comic-book backgrounds—and the strip animation openers and panels—effect. The panels were splendid. Particularly the first with Aunt Bedelia's car arriving in long-shots and close-ups, five shots on the same screen.

ROMERO: The car, yeah—well, I'm glad that works for you. I was concerned about it. But I said, Hey, let's go for it. Steve backed me up in it...

KING: Sure.

ROMERO: ... and we let it fly. I hope it does work.



9. BIG-TIME CASTING

One positive difference, and maybe a problem, was working with name actors for the first time.

ROMERO: Yeah. I was up-tight about that.

Intimidated. Why? They all worked well.

ROMERO: Well we talked a lot about the types of people we wanted and discussed each individual as the names came up. And yes, we're really happy with them.

How did you choose the cast?

KING: We had no boundaries. The budget itself dictated certain choices — not this person and that person, but another. I can't remember anybody specific, but let's say X actor — and I'm not, you know, not trying to say names, I just can't remember. But X Actor would be fifty or a hundred thousand dollars out of our reach in terms of budget. They would have broken the budget, so we had to think about it. I think from the jump that both George and I went for guys who had a reputation for working fast and well and honestly. Guys that just are good, workmanlike actors, who maybe don't have the Burt Reynolds reputation, the people that you would nominate for The Strother Martin Award!

Or The L.Q. Jones Trophy?

KING: That's right. Character actors. Then, you also have guys like Fritz Weaver and Hall Holbrook, people who are above that. George was saying the other night that it'd be great to work with Fritz again, be great to work with Adrienne again another time.

ROMERO: Everybody had a good time. As Steve says, we didn't cast it to make a deal from it. We cast it from people — it was a protection factor.

Or you were up-tight about the cast, George, were they nervous?

ROMERO: Perhaps, I don't know.

Obviously Adrienne knew who you were, maybe Holbrook too as he's been through Carpenter country, but what about Fritz, E.G. Marshall, Leslie Nielsen and the others?

ROMERO: Well, most of them knew *Night of the Living Dead* and had heard the title, *Dawn of the Dead*, but had probably not bothered to see it. I think a few of them came in with reservations, thinking, "My God, I'm going to Pittsburgh — what am I getting into here?"

Or, How much of me is going back!

ROMERO: But the point is nobody came in more worried about their Winnebago (*Caravan dressingroom*) than doing the job. I think to a man, everyone just enjoyed being the hell away from the back lot and enjoyed the sort of family atmosphere we have. There's always tension but it's fun at... *Camp Laurel, right?*

ROMERO: It is!

KING: I'd never worked with stars another than George. My experience with stars was, you know, at a supermarket opening. I took my son, Joe, to meet Batman! So at the beginning of the thing, I was depressed. Then, Viveca Lindfors came in. I'd seen a lot of her movies and I said, "I'm Steve King, and it's wonderful to meet you." And she said, "It's very nice to meet you, young man. Is it unafish or egg today?" She thought I was the caterer!

ROMERO: (Believes with laughter).

KING: And that sort of miscommunication, misapprehension went on for about three days. So, what I did was, I got her the sandwiches — which added to it. See, she was dubious, too. She didn't know us. She said, "I've never been killed by a monster in a movie before," and this sorta thing. She didn't know. She thought George was all cut and hack and slash. It took her awhile to warm up, but when she did she was terrific.

ROMERO: Most of them had fears about, you know, "I've gotta get out of here and fire my agent next week" — only because they didn't know what we'd be up to. I think had it just been me, it would have been more difficult, but because of Stephen's attachment to the project, it made it a lot easier.

Well, sure. Every movie needs a good caterer... I hadn't realised the terror of the graveyard, Viveca Lindfors, has been working so much in America recently, so I had wondered... Why her?

ROMERO: Most recently she was in *The Hand and she* looked pretty good. And we needed an Aunt Bedelia. That was, actually the toughest part to cast. Unless you go in for Ruth Gordon, there aren't a lot of character women around.

Ruth Gordon would have killed the monster. Talked her to death. But Viveca, of course, used to be married to Don Siegel and goes way back to Joe Losey's *The Damned* (1963).

ROMERO: She goes back to Errol Flyn, (*The Adventures of Don Juan*; 1948).

MRS KING: She played opposite Ronald Reagan. (*Night Unto Night*, 1949)

10. STAR OF THE SHOW

Don't know about you, but the grandstand actor for me in the entire movie was Fritz Weaver in *The Crate*.

BOTH KINGS: Oh, right. He was wonderful. (*Wait for it...*) Wow!

When he comes out of the cellar having seen the Thing, bumps into the kid in the corridor and goes completely inarticulate, he was...

ROMERO: Extraordinary!

I don't know how much of what he's trying to say, is as per script or improvised.

KING: The lines are exactly verbatim. But the way he did it I'd read somewhere he'd said, "I won't want to see the creature until he pops out. I want a reaction that's 100% genuine." So that's what he did.

ROMERO: He's an incredible craftsman. Amazing. Watching him, sitting near him and watching him work is incredible.

KING: And what a gentleman!

ROMERO: Even when I'm doing hand shots of him with the little chess pieces, his hand was balletic, you know. Every move he makes — he's in such control of his body and his voice. I was knocked out. *Knocked out!* The other real big revelation for me was putting someone who was doing such a big, theatrically technical performance like Fritz next to someone like Holbrook — whose performance I never saw until I got him twenty-five hours. Because even sitting across the table from Hal, you don't see him working. And yet it works.

MRS KING: He was playing the timid aspect.

ROMERO: Yeah, but those two styles together: I thought we were in trouble until I started to cut it together.

11. SAVINI EFFECTS

So as well as all the jumps we have Tom Savini to thank for Fritz Weaver's astonishing performance. Tom made the creature, of course.

ROMERO: Of course! Well, Tom is a very close friend of mine and we work very well together. I just love Tom's work. In *Creepshow*, Tom has a chance to do more than just body-wounds! He gets to show his stuff a little bit. I'm sorry... He did a wonderful creature in *The Crate* and we decided not to use a lot of the footage. And Tom was in perfect agreement with it. That thing was... marvellous.

How did it work — hydraulics, puppetry or both?

ROMERO: The costume was built and worn by an actor and controlled by several technicians. So, the top of it, to the arms, are the principal actor. His head is in the face mask, his eyes are seen through it. And the rest of the snout comes out. The cheek and lip movements and everything else are controlled by hydraulics, outside the costume... and its feet were worked by other people as puppets. We were actually able to make him scurry across the floor at one point. We dug a hole in the floor of the gymnasium and we had these collapsible sliding floor panels, so that when he walked, the creature's feet, above the actor's waist, were being operated like puppets and the actor is half-way under the floor. We decided to just 86 (*dump*) that. There's a quick shot of it, but you can't really see it well.

Tom gave up his directing debut *Night of the Burning Moon*, to do *Creepshow*. Is that right, hype or was his movie postponed.

ROMERO: I don't think it was entirely postponed. I shouldn't be presumptuous enough to talk about it, except that I think it was a sort of frivolous offer on the part of (William) Friedkin. I gather Tom went back

to him and said, "Look I really wanna do *Creepshow*; can't we arrange things?" And there was no deal. There wasn't even a script! All Tom was asking for was four months and it came down to one of those awful scenes — "If you do this, you'll never be working on this waterfront again."

No wonder you guys stay in Pittsburgh and Maine...

12. BEACH BLANKET VIDEO

The Bugs episode must have presented the most problems in shooting.

ROMERO: Actually, no. It was the most unpleasant! But not the most difficult. It was a small set, easier to light — and one actor. *The Crate* was the most difficult, the most involved; we had to keep moving the walls all the time. *Father's Day* was tough because it was all location. And *The Tida* was not easy. (Laughs). So *Bugs* was the easiest.

What's all this about needing your own method of making waves on the beach. Didn't you just use a New Jersey beach, and shoot down low?

KING: We weren't allowed to drown actors, too bad.

There's a lot that deserve it.

But of course... idiot question.

ROMERO: No, it's something that I'm sure none of us thought about until Cletus said, "You know you can't really bury someone in the sand below the high tide line and wait for the tide to cover them." And we said, "Oh my god, yeah...!" So we worked up the beach a little and lots of people came up with these wave-making machines. They were like *The Guns of Navarona*! The size of a flight of stairs. They had three huge water-chambers in each one, they'd give you a single shot, a double — all the way up to six shots, or waves, which would completely cover the actors. And boy, those actors were game.

KING: The woman and Ted Danson? Oh yeah!

The woman is Gaylen Ross — Fran in *Dawn of the Dead*. She's up another end of the beach, also buried up to her chin and awaiting drowning like her love — some reward for surviving *Dawn*! Yet we see her only in black and white on Leslie Nielsen's video monitors.

Did you shoot her on film or some form of videotransfer?
ROMERO: We shot all film. Then we went to videotape and back from videotape to film, just to denigrate, break up the image a little... and out the video lines on. Then, we matted it into the tv sets. We couldn't use real video — we were outdoors, again — and we needed all six monitors for the interior set, so there was really no way to do it all with video.



EPILOGUE

You two love scaring people, right? So come clean now — what was the first movie to really scare the pants off you?

KING: The Creature From The Black Lagoon. Oh boy, I was terrified by the idea of him being walled up inside. That was terrible!

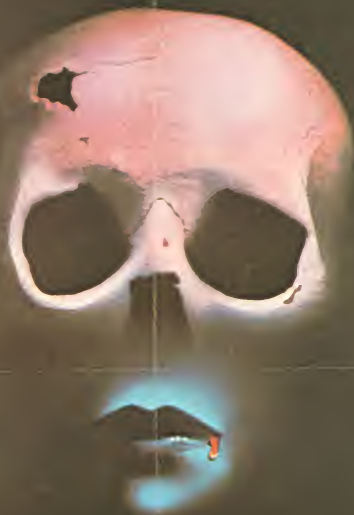
ROMERO: The original *Frankenstein*, which I saw as a kid on a re-issue with, I guess, *Bride of Frankenstein*. The scene with the tramp, that shook me up. But the first to knock me out was... er... *The Thing*.

KING: See, I'm exactly two years younger!

NEXT ISSUE

King and George on how the partnership started (Steve's reaction when George phoned him) and where it's going... covering: *Night of the Living Dead's* trilogy, *Salem's Lot*, *The Stand*... and *Creepshow* II?

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DARIO ARGENTO



Inferno

SALVATORE ARGENTO
criticamente assistito da Dario Argento e Luciano Gatto
DARIO ARGENTO

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LEOPOLDO MASTELLONI / **RENE MIRACLE** / **DARIANO COLODI**
SACHA PITOEFF / **ALIDA VALLI** / et **LEIGH MCCLOSKEY** dans le rôle de l'opéra

scénario de **CHAL SWOFFORD** / **ALIDA VALLI**

musique de **KEITH EMERSON** / dirigée par **GOO FREY SALMON**

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